

More Important Things

This is my attempt at a challenge set by witowsmp where 'Dumbledore Answers Harry' when he asks at the end of first year why Voldemort is after him. My intentions are the story will be in two distinct parts (below is chapter 1 of part 1) as I might need to raise the rating on part two due to the body count I'm planning. Trying not to bash anyone in this fic except the bad guys. (Ron bashing doesn't count!)

Disclaimer: you may recognise a phrase or two from the first book at the beginning of this story, I don't own them or any of the characters – it all belongs to JKR.

Chapter 1

4th June 1992 – Chasing the Stone.

"But Harry – What if you-know-who is with him?"

"Well – I was lucky once wasn't I?" said Harry, pointing to his scar. "I might get lucky again."

Hermione's lip trembled as she suddenly dashed at Harry and threw her arms around him.

"Hermione!"

"Harry you're a great wizard you know."

"I'm not as good as you," said Harry, very embarrassed, as she pulled away.

"Me!" said Hermione "Books! And Cleverness! There are more important things friendship and bravery and...Oh Harry, please be careful!"

Hermione had her arms once more around Harry and didn't want to ever let him go while berating herself for not saying the one word she was desperate to tell him – love.

Harry was sure she nearly said love and, while he had no recollection of ever receiving any, knew he felt something different for Hermione than anyone else in his life. His Gryffindor courage had failed him a moment ago yet here he was being given a second chance, considering what might be waiting for him on the other side of the flames, perhaps a last chance. He placed both his hands on Hermione's head and gently moved it into a position where he had access to her lips, if he was going to face death he was at least going to experience his first kiss with the girl he really liked.

This action was so unexpected that Hermione only sussed what Harry was doing seconds before he kissed her. 'Oh my God, Harry likes me!' was screaming through her brain before being mercilessly bludgeoned into silence by her awakening hormones that changed the broadcast message to 'Kiss him back so he knows you like him!' Hermione was used to doing what her mind told her and this was one command she was delighted to put her heart and soul into.

There were no flashes, bangs or earth shattering tremors but both thought that the kiss was magical and glad that they were each other's first.

Harry and Hermione were instantly aware that the kiss had blasted their relationship out of the friends bracket and onto another level entirely, neither had held back and both had poured their feelings for the other into their kiss.

"Wow! I want to do that again, and again."

Hermione smiled, "As long as it's with me I don't see that as a problem."

Considering how Harry had felt moments ago his mood had done a polar flip and was now off the scale on his rarely used happiness meter, "I won't be kissing anyone other than my girlfriend ever again."

Hermione's smile now had an output measured in megawatts as she kissed Harry this time before saying, "You just make sure you stay safe and bring that cute butt back to me."

One final kiss and Harry watched as his new girlfriend drank from the round bottle and headed off through the flames to raise the alarm, he couldn't help but ponder that if she thought his butt was cute then hers was simply beautiful.

These were his last pleasant thoughts as he drank his potion and passed through the flames to discover what awaited him on the other side.

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Harry slowly surfaced from the darkness and his first thought was for his girlfriend's safety, he sat straight up. "Hermione!"

A throaty chuckle greeted his proclamation, Harry discovered he was in the Hogwarts infirmary and had the headmaster for company.

"Miss Granger is fine Harry, well she will be when Madam Pomfrey relents and allows her in to see you. She is a formidable young witch when she sets her mind to something and is slowly wearing down Poppy's resistance, I couldn't of course comment on someone using a certain cloak to sneak in here out of hours."

Harry relaxed, smiling at the thought of Hermione breaking the rules to sneak in here to see him. "Sir, Voldemort and the stone?"

"Professor Quirrell died when Voldemort left his body to make his escape and the stone was recovered before being destroyed."

"But what about your friend Nicolas Flamel, won't he die?"

"Well done Harry, you did your homework."

"Sir with Hermione involved there's no other option."

Albus nodded in agreement, "The Flamels have enough elixir stored to allow them time to set their affairs in order before embarking on the next great adventure. The risk of Voldemort gaining that amount of

power proved just to great a risk to allow the stone's continued existence."

Harry thought for a moment, "He's not gone is he sir?"

"Alas I fear not, we can only hope that his next attempt meets with as spirited a resistance as this last one."

"Sir, there is something I'd like to know the truth about, can you tell me?"

"The truth is a beautiful yet terrifying thing, and therefore should be treated with great caution. I shall answer your question unless of course I have a very good reason not to, in which case I beg your forgiveness. I shall not, of course, lie."

"Well Voldemort told me he only killed my mother because she tried to stop him killing me, why did he want to kill me in the first place?"

"Alas the first thing you ask me I cannot tell you, you will know one day but not today, not now. I know you don't want to hear it but you're too young for such a burden. When you are older I will of course answer the question then."

Harry was starting to get angry, "With respect sir, Voldemort has just tried to kill me for the forth time. You yourself just admitted that he's not dead so will return and you don't need to be Hermione to work out he'll be coming after me when he does. Already having the knowledge that he will come after me until one of us is dead is the burden, knowing why he's obsessed with me could only help."

Albus could see Harry was deadly serious and the old wizard couldn't fault the young lad's logic so, against his better judgement, decided to tell him at least some of what he wanted to hear.

"Harry please understand that this information must be kept secret, if the dark side discovers it the consequences could be dire." Having delivered his warning Dumbledore answered Harry, "Before you were born a prophecy was made that a child would be born with the power to defeat the dark lord. I will not disclose the whole thing but the child

mentioned is you and Voldemort is desperate to end that threat before you get too powerful. The prophecy doesn't say who will win, only that one must die at the hand of the other."

Harry already knew that Voldemort wanted him dead so that revelation wasn't much of a shock, the fact that he might have the power to defeat him was and led directly to another question.

"Sir if I have the power to defeat him then why have I spent ten of the last eleven years locked in a cupboard without even knowing that magic existed instead of being in training?"

Albus sighed, "I'm sorry my boy, I thought it was important that you have as near normal a childhood as possible."

Harry was ready to rant and rave but his conscience, which seemed to have acquired Hermione's voice, shouted NO! Stay calm and work out what to do next.

Harry simply said, "Thanks for trusting me with this information sir," while his brain was yelling 'normal childhood?'

They chatted for a few minutes more but Albus could see the lad's heart wasn't in it, his mind was still digesting the information he'd just been told.

Dumbledore's leaving was the signal for Hermione and Ron to enter the ward, Hermione raced towards Harry and having him open his arms for her was all the encouragement the young witch needed. She pounced on him, and as his arms circled around her back, began kissing her boyfriend.

Ron stood transfixed, mouth open and eyes almost bulging out his head. What, where and why were the questions he wanted answered but he would have to get his mouth to work first.

When they showed no sign of stopping Ron finally got his vocal chords to vibrate with something resembling English, "Hermione, what in the name of Merlin are you doing?"

Harry and Hermione's eyes never left each other, "I thought that would be obvious even to you Ron, I'm kissing my boyfriend."

Ron was forced to repeat her last comment just in case there was something lost in the translation from Hermione speaking to his ears picking up the signal, "You're kissing your boyfriend?"

"Yes Ron, Harry's my boyfriend. Surely you didn't think I would go around kissing just anybody."

"When did this happen?"

Both were still wrapped up in each other's arms, unable to believe their luck that the person they liked actually liked them back. Harry answered Ron, "We made the decision before I went in to face Voldemort."

If Harry or Hermione had been looking at Ron they would have seen that he was building himself up towards an explosion, "So let me see if I've got my facts right here, I sacrificed myself so you two could continue and you were so concerned about me you both immediately began snogging."

Hermione frowned, "Not immediately, but yes that's pretty much describes what happened."

"Well don't let me interrupt your snogging."

"You won't," said Harry kissing Hermione again.

Ron stormed out the infirmary, his face contorted to resemble that of a dragon suffering from haemorrhoids and making so much noise that Madam Pomfrey appeared, chasing a now very unhappy Hermione out. Before leaving she whispered into Harry's ear, "I've got your cloak and will be back later."

This left Harry with the time needed to figure out what he was going to tell Hermione and what to do with the information that he had to kill Voldemort or be killed by him. He quickly decided to tell Hermione everything because if she was going to be his girlfriend then she

needed to know what that meant. At the moment only Ron knew about the couple but if she still wanted him after hearing what he had to say then Harry intended to shout it off the top of the astronomy tower that Hermione Granger was his girlfriend. There was no way they could hide this even if they wanted to, Harry couldn't remember ever being hugged or kissed but Hermione approached the subjects with even more enthusiasm than she did her studies, considering she was easily the best student in their year that was really saying something.

He also needed her support for what he was planning at the end of term; convincing her this was his best option was going to be the most difficult part.

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Harry felt her weight settle on his bed before Hermione's face poked out the cloak hood and gave him a quick kiss, he pulled her down beside him and whispered in her ear that she should get herself comfortable as he had a lot to tell her and would understand if she didn't want to date him after hearing his tale.

Harry was worried and kissed her again before starting, just in case things went badly.

Hermione clung to him as she heard about life with the Dursleys and finally what Dumbledore had told him this afternoon.

Hermione was aghast as the questions flowed, "Why haven't you been receiving special lessons? Hell why were you placed with those monsters in the first place?"

"Dumbledore said he wanted me to have a normal childhood."

All Harry's fears of losing Hermione over this evaporated as she flung off the invisibility cloak and, with wand drawn was ready to go looking for the headmaster.

He managed to pull her to him and calm her down enough to replace the cloak before she was caught, "Hermione I want you to listen to

me but first I need your promise that if you disagree with my plan that you won't go running to McGonagall or Dumbledore for help."

"Harry I could never do that to you!"

"Hermione love, if you thought my plan was dangerous or reckless then you would do anything to keep me safe, even informing a professor."

"Is it dangerous or reckless?"

"Hermione I've nearly been killed by Voldemort three times since coming to Hogwarts and not once was my life saved by a professor, what could be more dangerous than that?"

Hermione knew he was leaving out Trolls, three-headed dogs and baby dragons so conceded his point and promised.

"Hermione I need to find out who I am, I spent ten years living in a cupboard being called a freak and told my parents were worthless drunks who died in a car crash. Since discovering that I'm a wizard I've continually been told how good my parents were and, judging by my vault in Gringotts wealthy as well. Now here's my problem, how is it possible that my good, wealthy parents arranged for me to be left on the Dursley's doorstep like a morning newspaper?"

Hermione had her face uncovered and Harry's green eyes were melting into her brown ones as he presented his argument, "You're a first generation witch yet when I met you on the express you knew more about my life than I did, Dumbledore ordered me sent there and is trying to make sure I return again this summer. I need to know if this is what my parents wanted for me or if someone other than Voldemort also has plans for my life."

It was a very hesitant Hermione who asked the question she wasn't sure she wanted the answer to, "Harry what are you going to do?"

"I'm going to run away!"

Hermione held him tight and realised just how well Harry knew her, her instincts were screaming that she should inform an adult immediately but she pushed them aside because her boyfriend needed her. "Where will you go?"

"My first stop will be Gringotts and that's as far as I've got because everything depends on what I find there. My whole life feels like it's been contrived and controlled with what I wanted never being taken into consideration."

Hermione suddenly had an idea, "Harry you could stay with me, we've plenty of room and I'm sure my parents would love to meet you. I may have mentioned your name once or twice in my letters home." She was actually blushing now, "I wrote them that you were now my boyfriend and they want to meet you at the station."

"Hermione there's nothing I would like better but I don't think I would be there long before somebody magical turned up to return me to the Dursleys, your parents wouldn't have a clue what's going on or a chance against a witch or wizard who demanded I go with them. I won't be roughing it Hermione, there's more than enough gold in my vault for hotels while I work out my next move."

"Harry are you running away from the Dursleys, Hogwarts or something else?"

He thought for a minute, "Basically everything and everyone except you and Ron." When he saw the dark expression at the mention of Ron's name Harry knew this was bad news. "What's he done this time?"

"Oh he very publicly and rather loudly called me just about every name he could think of that had a 'scarlet woman' theme. I'm beginning to think he's jealous and wishes it was him kissing you."

Harry shuddered at the thought, "Think I'd rather kiss Fluffy."

"A giant three headed dog that slobbers or Ron Weasley is no contest for me either – it probably has better table manners and eats less than him as well."

“Well that’s his name off the very short list, I’m sick of being the-boy-who-lived or Dursleys servant and can’t see any other way to do this.”

Taking a deep breath Hermione asked, “How can I help?”

Harry hugged her, knowing what this meant to the girl who hated breaking rules, “I plan to walk off the train wearing my father’s cloak and leaving everything else behind, I need you to take care of Hedwig for me until I can sort something out.”

“Can you do this Harry?”

“I have to Hermione, the idea that Hogwarts is the safest place in the country would be laughable if the situation wasn’t life or death. Voldemort knows where I am ten months of the year and even managed to get a job here teaching defence against the dark arts, again laughable if it didn’t nearly get me killed. Spending time in history of magic or having Snape sneer at me in potions class is not going to prepare me for what I need to do.”

“You know of course I’m coming with you when you find a new school or private tutors, my parents wanted to pull me out of here after the troll incident so I would only be returning if you are forced to.”

This was better than anything Harry could have hoped for, he spent the rest of the evening hugging and kissing as their plans got steadily more refined than just the basic ‘running away’ that Harry had envisioned earlier.

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Harry eventually escaped from Pomfrey’s prison by promising to do everything in his power to stay out of her tender clutches next term, it was a promise he had every intention of keeping. He and Hermione walked hand-in-hand around the lake enjoying the rare Scottish sunshine almost as much as each other’s company, neither had experienced much in the way of companionship so their new relationship was a massive boost to their self-confidence.

“So what have I missed?”

“The whole school is buzzing with the fact that he-who-is-not-dead had been teaching them for a year, I’ve no idea how Dumbledore has managed to keep it out the Prophet. Ron is no longer speaking to me but keeps producing these strange looks when he thinks I can’t see him, I think I preferred him shouting because he’s starting to creep me out.”

Harry put his arm comfortingly about her, “Don’t worry, I will be having words with the prat and if he can’t accept that we’re boyfriend / girlfriend then he’s really not our friend or worth bothering about.”

They forgot about Ron and just enjoyed the fact that they were together on such a beautiful day.

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Harry kissed Hermione goodnight and headed up to his dorm only to find Ron waiting to speak to him.

“Harry I want to say straight off that I’m sorry about my behaviour with you guys, when I calmed down and thought about it I think it’s a bloody brilliant idea.”

Harry let out the breath he wasn’t even aware he’d been holding, he wasn’t going to stand for anyone interfering between Hermione and him but didn’t have that many friends that he could afford to casually throw one away.

“Thanks Ron, that means a lot.”

“No problem mate I’m just sorry I couldn’t figure it out sooner, using Hermione as a practice girlfriend so you know what you’re doing when a good-looking witch comes along is inspired. Can you help me find one? Not too ugly mind!”

Harry’s right fist broke Ron’s nose quickly followed by his left that broke their friendship forever. The other three Gryffindor boys couldn’t help but overhear Ron digging his own grave, a mere glance

at the couple was all that was necessary to see how much they cared for each other.

Harry was in a total rage as he silently pummelled a now squealing Ron, pounding his fists into his former friend's face before the combined efforts of Neville, Dean and Seamus managed to drag him off.

Ron's squeals had drawn a crowd and when the twins appeared they took one look at their bloodied brother before whirling round to confront his attacker. Faced with an enraged Harry Potter who, less than a week ago just defeated the dark lord again and anything they were going to say died in their throats.

Harry was still struggling to escape the grip of his three roommates when pompous Percy arrived and the prefect pointed his wand at his brother's assaulter only to be knocked flying by Hermione, who didn't care who's toes she trampled on in her battle to get to Harry.

Once she had her arms around him she felt her boyfriend relax, as the boys released their hold on Harry his arms snaked around Hermione, which calmed him down even more.

This was the scene McGonagall came upon, a bleeding Ron Weasley lying crying on his bed while her two star first years were comforting each other in the middle of the room.

"I want an explanation and I want it now!"

McGonagall's tone froze everyone in the dorm except Harry, Still holding onto Hermione he answered her question. "Professor, Mr Weasley made some extremely derogatory remarks concerning my girlfriend that were unacceptable to me."

"And you think this is acceptable behaviour Mr Potter?"

"It was my intention to challenge him to a wizard's duel."

"You're too young to issue such a challenge."

“That’s what I thought professor so I just had to settle for punching his head in.”

if anything McGonagall was getting angrier, “I will not have members of my house brawling like common muggles.”

“Well since Professor Dumbledore took it upon himself to ensure I was raised by common muggles and denied contact with the wizarding world can I suggest you direct that complaint in his direction Professor.”

This was like being slapped in the face by a flounder for the head of Gryffindor house, she’d tried to tell Albus what kind of people he was leaving James and Lily’s son with but as usual he knew what was best for everyone. No matter she had to deal with the situation that faced her now.

“That will be fifty points from Gryffindor and your position on the Quidditch team will be up for review if I don’t see a marked improvement in your behaviour Mr Potter.”

“Professor please accept my resignation from the team here and now, the Nimbus is in the team Quidditch locker and can be passed on to the next seeker.”

McGonagall was aghast at the behaviour of this boy she would have labelled quiet but apparently he wasn’t finished with the shocks yet.

“Professor McGonagall, your next move should be to threaten me with expulsion from Hogwarts but, considering how many times I’ve almost been killed in this madhouse you call a school then you’d probably be doing me a favour. Since I got here I’ve been accused by staff and students of using my fame to my advantage so perhaps it’s time I started, there has to be more than one magical school in the world. What do you think the chances are of the boy-who-lived and the witch set to shatter all Hogwarts academic records being accepted as students elsewhere?”

McGonagall had no sanctions left to threaten them with so had to resort to bluster, "Mr Potter if you insist on breaking the rules then you really can't complain when you find yourself in danger."

Hermione had held her tongue for too long, it was time McGonagall realised this was a partnership, "Excuse me professor, wasn't it you who assigned us detention in the FORBIDDEN forest at night? Leading directly to Harry having to confront Voldemort and it may have slipped your mind but we came to you with our information on the stone only to be dismissed out of hand. Had we not acted Voldemort would have returned yet we're standing here being disciplined because Ronald Bloody Weasley thinks the world revolves around him and goes ballistic every time his delusional theory is proved wrong."

It was at this point the headmaster made his presence known, "Mr Potter could you please inform us what Mr Weasley said that was so shocking to warrant such a response?"

Harry just held Hermione tight and refused to open his mouth, it was Neville who stepped up to the plate. "Ron told Harry that having Hermione as a practice girlfriend until something better looking came along was a great idea and wanted Harry's help in finding one for him though she couldn't be too ugly."

The silence in the room was deafening as every female present tried to kill the prat just by staring at him, Hermione's confidence, though growing wasn't strong enough to take a hit like that without some tears being shed. Harry holding her tight and seeing what his response had been to the suggestion helped her regain some composure.

Neville finished with a heartfelt remark that almost had her smiling, "If Hermione was my girlfriend I would have done the exact same, we pulled Harry off so he wouldn't be in too much trouble, not to save that prat."

With every girl in the packed dorm now glaring daggers at Ron, any guy who wanted a date during their Hogwarts years quickly and publicly agreed with Neville. The prat had stepped way over the line

and when word of this got out the only female in the castle going anywhere near him would be Mrs Norris.

McGonagall privately agreed with Harry but had to regain control of the situation, "While I understand your motives Mr Potter I'm afraid I can't condone your methods so the punishment will stand."

"Fair enough professor but my decision also stands, I will no longer play Quidditch for Gryffindor. Anyone insulting Hermione will be met with an appropriate response so let's just call it quits now, save you banning me later."

Albus tried to intervene, "Are you really going to let Mr Malfoy's taunting of Miss Granger deprive you of playing Quidditch? That would be handing a victory to Slytherin."

Harry knew the only way he was returning to Hogwarts next term was with someone pointing a wand at his back and in the greater scheme of things who won the Quidditch cup wasn't even worthy of a footnote. "Well since it would appear that the staff of Hogwarts are aware of Draco's continual harassment of Hermione yet have never once acted to curtail it then yes, there are things a lot more important to me than Quidditch."

McGonagall was now pissed, "Mr Potter and Miss Granger, there are two days left of term so I suggest you use them to carefully consider your futures at this school, to avoid any distractions you shall both miss the leaving feast and I shall arrange for some food to be sent to the common room for you both."

The Weasleys were taking Ron to the infirmary as the dorm emptied, the entertainment was apparently over for the evening.

Harry called to the headmaster as he was about to exit the room, "Professor Dumbledore, the events here tonight had nothing to do with our discussions in the infirmary. I will always fight for what I believe to be right," with a rye smile he added, "It's my destiny."

Dumbledore left much happier than he'd been a few moments before.

McGonagall cleared the dorm but both Harry and Hermione were far too pumped up to consider sleep at the moment so headed back down to the common room and snagged a couch. They were sitting there leaning into one another when their head of house made her way passed, McGonagall wasn't able to leave without having the last word. "You both have an appointment in my office come September, I would suggest you leave the new attitudes on the train."

Neither replied because if they were here in September McGonagall would definitely be seeing them.

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It was a worried McGonagall that entered Dumbledore's office, "Albus that pair have spent the whole of this lovely sunny day in the library, Irma has informed me they were researching other magical schools and wizarding law. Are you sure about sending Harry back to those muggles for the summer? We may just be adding fuel to what is already quite a blaze."

"Minerva, Harry has to go there for his own good. Both students also have to attend Hogwarts next session unless their magical guardian says otherwise, since that is me then they will be here in September. Both have had quite a year and their new relationship has their emotions flying rather high at the moment, they will calm down over the summer when they don't get to see each other everyday and will be delighted to return here for that if no other reason. If their behaviour doesn't improve next term we will use the threat of expelling Miss Granger to bring them both into line."

"Would you actually do that Albus? I hate to think what his reaction would be if we sent Miss Granger away and you know Severus would be merciless on the boy."

"It builds character Minerva, I would hate to lose Miss Granger from the castle but it is imperative that Mr Potter remains here. If that means she has to be sacrificed while he's in detention every night then that will be up to them, they are the students and we are the professors and they have to realise that we know what's best for them."

Minerva privately thought their job was to provide education for the students, a task she was sure would prove to be impossible for Mr Potter if Miss Granger was expelled from the school. The worrying part was that Albus didn't seem to mind this as long as Harry remained here, that bright young mind could go to waste sweeping toilets or scrubbing cauldrons just as long as he was still in the castle. She recognised the signs that this was one of those times where Albus thought he knew what was best for everybody and she would be wasting her breath arguing. Minerva again thought he was wrong and she had found to her cost what underestimating those two brought, dismissing their claims that the stone was in danger could have cost them their lives or seen Voldemort return.

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Harry and Hermione were trying hard but failing spectacularly not to laugh at their punishment from their head of house. While the rest of Gryffindor had to watch Ron eat, listen to Dumbledore drone and then witness Slytherin being presented with the house cup, Hogwarts newest couple were sharing a quiet candle-lit dinner for two.

Had they been a bit older they would have appreciated the romantic setting the castle was providing but they just seemed to find everything funny tonight, perhaps it was the uncertainty of tomorrow that had them determined to enjoy their last night in Hogwarts. No matter what happened both knew that parting on the train was going to be very hard, especially since they didn't know when they would see each other again.

A/N thanks for reading.

As someone with over 25 years experience working with children of this age plus having raised two of my own I am aware Harry and Hermione's behaviour is rather mature for their ages. This is deliberate and will be explained in the following chapters.

Chapter 2

Harry and Hermione had a full compartment to themselves on the London bound express as it sped along the tracks towards their destination and the decision that would change both their lives. They were passing the time browsing through a photo album that Hagrid had presented Harry with just before they boarded the train; this actually seemed to harden Harry's resolve to carry out their plan.

He indicated a photo featuring his parents wedding, "look at all the people in this photograph with my mum and dad, they seem like the best of friends yet not one of them came forward to take me when they were murdered. I not only don't know any of their names I don't even know if their alive or dead. Why are none of these people now part of my life?"

Hermione held her boyfriend as the tears slowly rolled down her cheeks, he'd had such a crappy life and even a gift that obviously meant so much to him still possessed the power to hurt. She was letting the tears flow now because she was going to have to put on a brave face when they reached Kings Cross and had to leave the train by herself while trying not to draw attention to the fact that Harry wasn't accompanying her.

Harry put his new album into his girlfriend's trunk for safe keeping then shrunk his own before shoving it out the window of the moving train, leaving his trunk in the compartment would cause questions to be asked when it was found. They wanted the discovery that Harry had disappeared to be delayed as long as possible, he was certain the Dursleys wouldn't report him missing as they were far more likely to hold a celebration.

He had no need of clothes that didn't fit and Hermione had taken anything useful before the trunk was ditched, he wasn't sure if this was burning bridges but it felt good as it seemed like finally he had some control over his life.

They were undisturbed for the whole journey before inevitably it was time, they kissed before Harry said goodbye to Hedwig and disappeared under his cloak. Hermione opened the compartment

door and allowed her boyfriend to slip passed, ready to disembark as soon as the train ground to a halt.

She sat back down and tried to compose herself before having to face people without the boy who'd not only saved but changed her life, letting most of the students leave the train first she began to drag her trunk and Hedwig's cage off the train.

With her trunk now loaded onto a trolley and Hedwig's cage perched on top she was one of the last students to make her way through the barrier and began looking around for her parents. Hermione found her way blocked by a large obese man whose face was an unusual shade of puce, "That bloody bird belongs to the freak, where is the little shit?"

Hermione could only assume this was the fabled Vernon Dursley and neither she nor Harry had expected or planned for this, she decided to play dumb but polite. "I'm sorry sir; I have no idea what you're talking about. If you'll excuse me I need to find my parents."

Dursley's colour actually deepened as the veins in his enormous neck pulsed at an alarming rate, "You're one of those freaks! I drive all the way out here and the ungrateful little shit thinks he can play games does he?" Vernon then grabbed Hermione by the shoulders and began to shake her, "Tell me where he is, the freak is going to be sorry when I get my hands on him."

Unfortunately for Vernon, Dan Granger started speeding towards Hermione when he first spied the stranger approaching his daughter, when the bastard laid hands on his little princess then Dan lost his temper for the first time in many years.

Dan Granger had been a very talented rugby player in his youth but dentistry paid the bills and was a far more stable career for raising a family, he'd had to give the game up because broken fingers didn't exactly help with his daily occupation. A gym built into their home kept him in tip-top shape though and his six-foot-two, one hundred and eighty pounds cannoned into Vernon with a force that must have felt like he'd just been hit by the Hogwarts express.

Dan's shoulder sank deep into his victim's flab but the laws of physics dictated that the amount of force generated was way more than enough to move the mountain of lard, Vernon was lifted off his feet before hitting the station platform hard with a very irate father of the girl he'd just been shouting at landing on top of him.

Emma Granger now had her arms around her crying daughter after following behind the swathe her husband had cut through the crowd, they both watched as Dan tried to question the very fat man lying on the ground.

"Just what the hell were you playing at, grabbing my daughter like that? Who the bloody hell are you anyway?"

There was no answer from the tub of lard other than wheezing that would be more appropriate from an asthmatic octogenarian climbing stairs, Vernon physically had the wind knocked out his sails.

"Leave my husband alone you freak," said a horsed faced woman who made Olive Oyl seem overweight though there was no way her accompanying child could be called 'sweet pea'. "How dare you lay hands on him you ruffian, we shall be taking this matter further and involving the constabulary."

"That sounds like a great idea," said Dan as two railway police made their way towards the disturbance.

They eyed Dan warily while asking what the problem was; both relaxed when he introduced himself.

"Good afternoon gentlemen I'm Dr Daniel Granger, this is my wife Dr Emma Granger and our daughter Hermione. We were collecting our daughter when this man who we've never seen before suddenly starts shouting at her then grabs her with both hands and begins shaking her like some kind of rag doll."

"He's lying!" proclaimed the long-faced mare so Dan casually produced his wallet to confirm his identification, meanwhile three separate people approached the officials and authenticated the Granger's version of events.

Vernon was still on the ground struggling for breath but receiving no sympathy whatsoever, the railway policeman apologised to Dan and asked if he wanted to press charges.

One look at his daughter shaking her head made his mind up, she obviously just wanted to get out of here and Dan couldn't wait to find out what the hell was going on.

"No, I'm going to assume he made a mistake," he then glared at the prone man, "A mistake he won't make again." Dan was certain he had at least cracked a couple of the fat mans ribs and was keen to avoid awkward questions like 'what train did your daughter get off?' so didn't want to hang about.

Dan shook hands with the railway policemen and led his family out of the station towards their car.

-oOoOo-

They made it out to the car as Hermione spoke to a clearly trembling snowy owl while placing the cage beside her in the back seat, "Its ok Hedwig, this is my mum and dad and you'll be staying with us for a while until Harry contacts us girl. That bad man and his family won't get to hurt you or Harry anymore."

"Is that Harry's pet and why do you have her?" asked Emma, Dan was going to let her ask the questions as his job was to scare the boyfriend who didn't even turn up.

"Hedwig is not a pet mum; she's Harry's familiar and a very clever post owl. She understands everything you say and why she's with me is complicated."

The parents plan went out the window as Dan just couldn't help himself, "Hermione your mother and me went through years of university and now run our own dentistry practice, trust me when I say we can do complicated."

“That man you hit in the station was Harry’s uncle and no dad, Harry is nothing like him. He’s actually quite like you in many ways, sweet, gentle and kind but didn’t hesitate for a second when jumping onto the back of a twelve foot mountain troll that was trying to hurt me.”

Dan was worried now at this amount of buttering him up, whatever it was she had to tell them must be bad. “And he’s your boyfriend? Just how serious a boyfriend are we talking here?”

Hermione had at least hoped they would have made it home before she had to answer that particular question and just prayed Harry’s luck was better than hers. Her mother was half turned round in her seat awaiting an answer while her dad kept glancing in the mirror. She had the same determined expression on her face as when she stood up to McGonagall, “Mum, Dad, Harry is a very serious boyfriend.”

An exasperated Dan replied, “Hermione you’re still only twelve, it’s not normal to have a ‘very serious’ boyfriend at twelve.”

Hermione had tears running down her cheeks, “You’re forgetting dad, I’m not normal – I’m a witch!”

Emma gave her husband the look that would have been recognised by married men the world over; it meant that Dan was dangerously close to sleeping alone tonight and the next ‘look’ in the series simply indicated ‘sofa!’

“Honey ignore the big scary man behind the wheel, his testosterone levels are still sky high from the station, could you explain to me what is different with you being a witch?”

“Harry and I spent days exploring our relationship,” Hermione let out a scream as her father momentarily lost control of the car. “DAD! Not like that. We hold hands all the time, hug a lot and kiss, nothing more than that for a long time.”

Dan would normally be ready to snap in two any boy who’d kissed his daughter but after where his thoughts went a second ago kissing didn’t seem too bad at all – he especially liked the ‘long time’ remark.

"We read every book in the library about relationships between magical couples and made some startling discoveries, when Harry saved my life from the troll it created a magical bond called a life debt. Then when I saved Harry's life as his broom was being hexed they should have cancelled each other out but the fact that we both really liked each other brought our magic into play and we think it amplified the effects."

A bemused Emma was still none the wiser, "Hermione, in muggle English please."

"Harry and I are both quite quiet and private people; we knew that to be hugging each other in front of others wasn't behaviour that we'd usually be comfortable with so we think our magic gave us a little push."

"You're being forced into being this boy's girlfriend?" growled Dan.

She shook her head fervently, "No dad, I've really liked Harry since I met him but couldn't believe he liked me back."

"What's not to like?" her father asked.

Hermione gave a weak smile, "I knew you were both alike because that's exactly what Harry said."

"You still haven't told us where Harry is or why he couldn't meet with us in the station?" Emma asked.

The amount of tears cascading down his daughter's cheeks had Dan pulling over to the side of the road as he realised they'd now got to the bad bit.

"You both saw those people he's forced to live with and believe me when I say first impressions didn't do them justice; they're a lot worse than that. Until he got his Hogwarts letter they made him live in a cupboard under the stairs, he does most of the cooking but gets fed on scraps, forced to work like a slave while wearing his huge cousin's cast off clothes. Told all his life he was a worthless freak whose

drunken parents died in a car crash. Can you imagine his surprise and shock when he gets to Hogwarts and discovers he's famous, wealthy and his parents died heroes."

Emma and Dan didn't know how to answer their daughter, who would?

"Harry sneaked passed his relatives using his father's invisibility cloak and was heading towards Gringotts to try and find some answers to the riddles in his life."

Emma had her hand over her mouth, "Hermione are you telling us Harry is running away? And you're helping him!"

"The short answer is yes, when I found out the full story I just had to."

"You will be telling us the full story young lady and we need to report that young boy as missing."

"I have to say no to both of those mum, there's a lot you need to understand first. When I said Harry was famous I don't just mean like some minor celebrity always trying to promote their latest project, it's more in line with Prince William famous. Now can you imagine HIS mother would want her son dropped off on the Dursley's doorstep to be abused and lied to for the rest of his life. For that to happen in our world would be unthinkable but that's exactly what happened in the magical world so to use a quote 'something is rotten in the state of Denmark' and Harry's trying to discover what is going on."

Dan was in danger of losing his temper for the second time today, "Hermione, just because you were named after a Shakespearian character doesn't turn you and Harry into Romeo and Juliet."

"I know that dad, Harry and I are actually hoping for an ending where neither of us dies of anything but old age." Hermione burst into tears that quickly became sobs as Emma rushed out her seat to join her distraught daughter in the back of the car.

"Honey what is it?" Emma asked while comforting the crying witch.

“Harry was nearly killed again just after asking me to be his girlfriend, he was unconscious for two days in the infirmary and I was so worried. That was the third time an attempt was made on his life since going to Hogwarts.”

“Well Hogwarts will be missing a certain Miss Granger this September.”

“Dad neither Harry nor I want to go back but we may not have a choice, we both have magical guardians and suspect that it may be Dumbledore. He will never let Harry leave and will want me there to threaten Harry with my expulsion if he doesn’t do as he’s told. We can’t even transfer to another magical school without his permission.”

Dan lost it, “Who do these bastards think they are, going to tell us what we can and can’t do with our daughter’s future. If necessary we’ll leave the country, false passports, whatever it takes but you are not going back to that nuthouse of a school.”

“Does this mean we’re running away?” Hermione asked sweetly.

This was like being hit by a bucket full of ice water for Dan Granger, had he just been played by his not yet thirteen year old daughter? They knew she was intelligent, scarily so sometimes but this was a new development.

“Hermione?”

She tried to explain, “Harry is at the bank trying to discover if there is anything we can do about the magical guardian issue, one glance at the Dursleys was enough to tell you that they couldn’t care less if Harry left. If that can be done then I’ve invited Harry to stay with us as our guest while you get to know him and we can all look through the other schools prospectus to find one that fits what we want. Failing that the next best option is to disappear until we’re seventeen while employing private tutors to teach us magic, if the goblins won’t help then he’s going to empty his vault, change it to sterling and hide in the muggle world.”

Her parents couldn't believe this was the same girl they had last seen at Christmas.

Hermione continued displaying her new found confidence, "Harry and I have had a few days to sort all this information out, once we made the decision that we didn't want to return to Hogwarts our choices were severely limited which is why Harry couldn't meet you in the station."

"Why do I feel we're not being told the full story," asked Dan.

"Because I can't, some powerful magical people can read your thoughts straight out your head. There are also potions that make you tell the truth but you can't tell what you don't know, when Harry contacts me he will only say he's safe not where he is."

If anything Hermione grew even more serious, "This isn't some playground game dad, the magical world holds many wonders but it can be an exceedingly dangerous place. There's a whole class war going on where people get murdered because they don't have the right parents, Harry's famous because he ended the last war when the leader killed his parents but his curse bounced back off baby Harry and hit the evil wizard. There has been relative peace for almost ten years but it's starting again, Harry is in the middle of it but so are we. As a witch of non-magical parents I'm considered the lowest of the low but the fact that I'm top student of our year blows their stupid blood purity ramblings out the water so we would be pretty near the top of their hate list even without Harry's involvement."

Dan was appalled, "It sounds like Hitler and his whole eugenics program, 'life unworthy of life' and where does Harry fit into all this class bull?"

Hermione had no problem imagining Draco and his ilk in Hitler youth uniforms and designing armbands for those less pure than themselves to wear, "Harry's father was one of the purebloods who apparently didn't believe this rubbish either because his mother was like me, a first-generation witch. Harry would be classed as a half-blood but his status as the boy-who-lived and being the last of the Potter line kind of negates that. He's been kept totally in the dark

about everything relating to the Potters and hopes the goblins will help with that as well. The information is all there in the school library on how a war was fought at the same time as our WWII quickly followed by another one that baby Harry ended but it all seems to be happening again.”

Neither parent knew what to say, this was so new and over their heads that they just didn’t have a Scooby what to do next.

“We have a list of books that Harry’s going to try and get sent to us and as of tomorrow the wizarding newspaper will be delivered every day. The press seems to be controlled by whoever pays the most gold but the people believe everything printed and apparently there are no libel laws so they can print anything they want regardless of the facts.”

“Is there a new leader or something, how can it start up again if he’s dead?”

“He’s not dead mum, he’s actually more like a wraith or spirit. He possessed one of our professors this year and that’s who let the troll into the school and tried to kill Harry three times.”

Both parents spoke in unison, “you’re not going back to that nuthouse!”

Hedwig was moved into the front seat so Emma could travel the rest of the journey with Hermione in the back of the car, “Hermione there must be something good about the wizarding world?” her daughter’s instant smile almost had Emma laughing, “apart from Harry, what about that other boy you wrote about?”

Hermione’s demeanour changed back just as quickly, “He’s no longer our friend, he said some awful things to Harry about me and it took three other boys to pull Harry off him. Ron spent the night in the infirmary but I think that was more to give Harry time to cool down than to treat his injuries though he did have at least a broken nose.”

Emma hugged her daughter, “Sounds more like your father all the time.”

Emma and Dan had both felt they were losing their daughter to a world they could never be part of and then the revelation that the girl who'd hardly made a friend wanted them to meet her boyfriend had her father polishing his shotgun ready for action. Sitting in the car with her arm round Hermione as they discussed her first boyfriend while Dan pretended not to be hanging on every word felt wonderful and, apart from the snowy owl in the front seat, about as normal as life was going to get for the Grangers.

Both parents actually felt as if they'd stumbled into some Robert Ludlum novel and were worried about what the future held for their family but they were all together now and that was all that mattered for the moment.

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Ronald Bilius Weasley heard his full name bouncing off the Burrow walls as his mother's dulcet tones demanded his immediate attendance in the kitchen downstairs, like a condemned man he slowly made his way down the rickety staircase to discover what he was in trouble for this time. Greeting him on the table, laid out like exhibit A, was an emerald green knitted jumper with an H in the centre of it. He had meant to chuck it away but had forgotten so was now trying to come up with a story his mother would believe and yet would not get him into too much trouble.

"Explain!" was all she said, or should that be demanded.

"Harry and I had a fight and he no longer speaks to me; I found that folded on my bed so could only think he didn't want it anymore."

Molly Weasley was building up a good head of steam, "What happened and why were you fighting?"

"Harry got a girlfriend and when I asked for his help to find me one he attacked me. I spent the night in the infirmary while he cost Gryffindor fifty points; he also missed the leaving feast and lost his place on the Quidditch team."

“The ignorant little toe-rag, after everything you’ve done for him he dumps you as soon as a girl comes on the scene. I spent hours knitting that and he chucks it back in my face, Albus will hear about this!”

She stormed off to make an irate floo call questioning if Dumbledore knew just what was happening at his school, Ron headed back up to his bedroom relieved at how lightly he’d escaped while congratulating himself on not even having resorted to telling lies.

Nobody paid any attention to the youngest Weasley as she reverently picked up Harry Potter’s jumper and retreated in the direction of her room while carrying the priceless possession, but then again nobody ever paid any attention to the youngest Weasley.

-oOoOo-

Minerva McGonagall left the headmasters office shaking her head, she hated when Albus simply refused to believe even in the possibility that he was wrong.

She was there when Molly Weasley called to tell them that Harry had returned his Christmas present from her and the overbearing Weasley matriarch was not best pleased, considering she’d never met the lad Minerva couldn’t really understand why she was getting so upset never mind sending him a present in the first place.

The Weasley family now considered Harry persona-non-grata to the full tribe of red heads because of his insult. When she said that Ginny had been so looking forward to meeting the boy-who-lived but now wouldn’t, the depute didn’t understand why but for some reason this upset Albus more than anything else she said.

Minerva McGonagall hated divination with a passion and felt it shouldn’t even be considered a branch of magic but something inside her was screaming that Albus was making an even bigger mistake than he made that night in Privet Drive, only this time it wasn’t just Harry that was going to suffer.

She'd tried to talk to Dumbledore but had to admit she would have had more luck teaching Hippogriffs to waltz, at least she tried. The Scotswoman was aware of her limitations, a superb teacher and deputy but never a leader. Albus Dumbledore was the most powerful and respected wizard in the world so she would just have to hope that he was right, even though she knew he wasn't.

-oOoOo-

On reaching home the Grangers decided they needed some cheering-up so the take-away menus came out the drawer with curries winning the day, they were clearing up the resulting carnage of the meal when a box just appeared in the middle of the table, drawing a shriek from Emma.

Hermione recognised the handwriting instantly, "It's from Harry!"

She opened the box extracting a lot of the books on their list but also found a small mirror that had a note stuck to it, 'say your boyfriends name.'

"Harry Potter."

After a few seconds Harry's face appeared in the mirror, "Oh Hermione am I glad to see you, did everything go Ok at the station?"

"Not really, your uncle recognised Hedwig and grabbed me trying to find out where you were."

Harry's shock was plain for her to see, "He actually physically grabbed you?" Hermione's nod caused an explosion at the other end, "The fat bastard! Griphook, I've changed my mind and want to hit the Dursleys with everything we can, nobody touches Hermione."

"Harry calm down, my dad was there and flattened him. He was still lying on the deck when we left, I thought you were joking when you said your cousin was the size of a baby whale but I saw it for myself today."

“He won’t be so fat for much longer, turns out I own that house and the company he works for, Vernon just found himself homeless and jobless, I was prepared to forgive his treatment of me but he crossed the line today grabbing you. Please say thanks to you dad and I just wish I could have seen it.”

“Tell him yourself, their both here listening.”

“Aw shit Potter, way to go in making a good first impression. Mr and Mrs Granger please excuse my earlier language, it’s not my normal as Hermione would thump me but I’ve had one hell of a day.”

Dan’s head appeared over Hermione’s right shoulder, “Son at this moment in time your use of language is the least of my worries, I really want to know what the bloody hell is going on here.”

“Perfectly understandable sir, can you give me a minute to check with Hermione so I don’t have to go over stuff she’s already told you.”

“I told them almost everything Harry so you can pick up from when you left me today, what are these mirrors?”

“Something my father and his friends invented and they were in my family vault along with letters from my parents, are you sitting down Hermione?”

“Yes Harry, and If you don’t tell me what happened pretty soon you’ll be earning that thumping you were talking about.”

“Hermione, is that any way to talk to a lord? Yes I’m actually lord Potter but you can still call me Harry. Now apparently this should all have been explained to me on my eleventh birthday, kind of makes me wonder why you got a visit from McGonagall and I got landed with Hagrid. Anyway the goblins are seriously pissed at this deliberate oversight and other irregularities in my accounts so are going to help me as much as possible. I’m safe in Gringotts and will be staying the night as there are some potions to help reverse the damage done by my childhood diet and a couple of monitoring charms that Dumbledore appears to have placed on me need removing.”

“That’s brilliant about the goblins helping and you know to me you’ll always be ‘just Harry’, what about the magical guardian thing?”

“Well at fourteen I can claim my head of house status and put you and your parents under its protection, at the moment there isn’t anything the ministry or Dumbledore can do about that. The goblins reckon there’s a good chance I could pull off my emancipation now but if it failed I’d be stuck at Hogwarts for another two year by which time our headmaster would probably have had the law changed to prevent me leaving at all so I think the best option for me is to disappear.”

It was in a tentative voice that Hermione asked, “What about me Harry?”

“We may have come up with a plan that can get you the freedom to go wherever you want...”

“Harry James Potter don’t even think about it, you can take that nobility streak of yours and ram it up your lordy arse! I know exactly what I’m getting myself into and if you try and break up with me over this I will hunt you down and hurt you bad.” A furious Hermione had tears flowing down her cheeks.

“Hermione I just want you to have other options available to you. I know you were quite excited over some of those European schools and I would hate to deprive you of that opportunity because I couldn’t go for at least another two years.”

“Don’t you get it Harry, it wouldn’t be an opportunity if you weren’t there, it would feel like a punishment that I don’t deserve. That night in the bathroom I had made up my mind to leave as I didn’t fit in at Hogwarts any better than my muggle school, you not only saved my life that night but changed it forever by becoming my friend – don’t ask me to give that up to attend somewhere else I wouldn’t fit in because the price is too high.”

“Hermione I have no intention of breaking up with you, I might not be as smart as you are but even I know you don’t throw away the best thing in your life. Let’s try and do this legally first then the world is

your oyster, if you and your parents think what I can offer is the best option I would be more than happy for you to come with me.”

Emma’s face appeared over Hermione’s left shoulder, “Harry, just what is it that you can offer?”

“I have a large residence and the goblins will provide some excellent tutors in what ever subjects we wish, they will come and go like that parcel appeared in your house tonight without ever knowing the location of where we actually are. You and Mr Granger would be able to contact or visit Hermione at any time using the same means and conditions – unless you wanted to stay in which case all restrictions would be removed and we would have no need for secrets. I hate keeping secrets from you but we discovered while researching in the library different means where that information could be gotten without your consent, they’re all illegal but that wouldn’t stop them being used.”

Dan again appeared in the picture, “Harry, if there’s a chance of getting my daughter legally out from under these people I want to take it no matter what she says, we can then look at all the options we have available including yours.”

Hermione wanted to argue but her dad agreeing with Harry was also something she was very keen on, she decided to concede this battle and save her arguments for winning the war. She was not being parted from Harry under any circumstances.

“Sir the goblins tell me the headmaster must have some devices monitoring me and we plan on setting them all off tomorrow morning about nine, you can bet it won’t be much later than that when he pays a visit to Hermione. With a bit of luck on our side we might be able to catch him off guard, sir do you think you would be able to act angry towards him?”

Dan practically growled, “Believe me Harry, there won’t be any acting required. Now what’s this plan?”

When Harry told him Dan couldn’t help but laugh. “Bloody hell Emma, how are we going to cope if these two team up against us, our

daughter already stitched us up today and now her boyfriend's taking on the government."

Emma's comment, "Yes they do make quite the pair," had both Harry and Hermione blushing.

-oOoOo-

Albus was getting ready to head off for his summer holidays before owls started arriving from parents demanding to know why he'd employed Voldemort to teach defence, Potter and Granger had confirmed all the rumours that evening in the Gryffindor dorm.

He was alarmed at the change in Harry since his latest adventure but he had yet to ascertain whether it was the result of his revelations in the infirmary or acquiring a girlfriend in the shape of Miss Granger. He would watch the situation closely and take action if required, his thoughts were instantly focused by every alarm he had linked to the boy suddenly going mental. He quickly called Minerva and both of them raced towards Privet Drive.

A/N thanks for reading and especially those who reviewed. I deliberately didn't include a 'Harry meets the goblins' scene and won't be including the obligatory shopping trip either.

Chapter 3

Vernon Dursley was enjoying a leisurely breakfast as he had no work today, he would have no work for the next few days at least, compliments of the four cracked ribs he was nursing from his confrontation in the station. The reason Vernon was enjoying his breakfast was two fold; the person who broke his ribs could never be a freak after blindsiding him with a tackle like that. Rugby was only taught in the best schools and the man's whole bearing and carriage screamed elite education, the final cherry on top was both he and his wife being doctors.

For some nonsensical rational Vernon could accept the beating and endured the pain like a badge of honour since it came from the kind of person he aspired to be. The main reason he was enjoying his breakfast though was that they seemed finally to be rid of the freak; a full scale celebration would be under way just as soon as these bloody painkillers could be replaced with the more pleasant Scotch variety – single malt at least.

His Glenfiddich goals were put on hold by the ringing of the doorbell, Petunia returned with a gentleman wearing a suit that Vernon would kill for.

"Vernon and Petunia Dursley, arrangements have been made wherein your nephew need never return to you again. All that is required is your signatures on these documents to make the whole thing legal and binding."

The official looking documents and gold pen were practically snatched out the man's hands and speedily signed by both parties.

The signed documents made their way into an elegant dragon skinned briefcase as the man asked, "Just to be perfectly clear here, neither of you want anything to do with you're nephew ever again?"

Two affirmative answers and the man's smile tuned distinctly predatory, "I really hoped you'd say that, Ok everyone it's time to move."

About twenty people entered the house and began packing the Dursley's possessions into boxes that they'd brought with them for this very purpose, when the pictures of darling Dudley started to be removed from the walls Petunia found her voice.

"What the hell do you think you're doing? Who are you people? Leave my son's pictures alone," she screeched.

This was the scene that Albus and Minerva burst into, panting after running from Arabella Figg's house having used her floo. They were expecting a battle to be in progress or even the dark mark floating above the house but nothing could have prepared them for the muggle removal men.

With ruthless efficiency they set about de-Dursleyfying number four Privet Drive while a speechless Vernon watched as his whole life passed before his eyes, literally passing before his eyes as it made its way out the front door and onto the removal van.

Albus actually shouted, "STOP! I don't know what's going on here but I demand you cease these actions immediately."

The man in the suit faced up to the wizard, "You admit you have no idea what the situation is here but you still demand we stop, that's quite a display of arrogance on your part don't you think?"

Albus was pretty miffed that not one worker paid him the slightest heed and continued their tasks uninterrupted.

"You have no idea what you're dealing with here; I really must insist you stop these actions at once."

"On the contrary Mr Dumbledore, it is you who has no idea what he's dealing with, but again with your usual arrogance are still issuing orders even though you have no right to be here and are currently trespassing."

Only the mention of his name stayed the old wizard's hand from reaching for his wand, he was at an informational and numerical disadvantage here so tried to balance out at least one of them. "I

didn't catch your name sir though it would appear you know who I am, I would like to know who I'm dealing with."

"Oh I apologise if I've given you the wrong impression here, you are not dealing with anyone. All the dealing has already taken place and didn't require your presence or input, good day to you and your companion sir."

Albus tried a different track, "Petunia what's going on? Where's Harry?"

Petunia was trying to sort out in her head just how this whole situation started, "He didn't appear off the train and when my Vernon asked a little bushy haired freak if she'd seen him her father attacked and broke my poor loves ribs. We were told if we signed some documents we would never have to see the little shit again and now these men are stealing all our possessions."

She was answered rather sharply, "Excuse me Mrs Dursley; we are simply moving your possessions to a secure storage facility until you can find alternative accommodation."

Dumbledore's complexion would make a pint of milk seem colourful but Vernon beat him to the next question, "What do you mean? This is our house and you can start putting all our stuff back where it belongs before I call the police."

"We both know who the real owner of this house is, Dumbledore here used the Potter money to buy it as well as the firm you work for but was unable to give you the deeds because that was against banking regulations as he didn't have full control of the Potter vaults." The man turned on Albus, "Didn't stop you trying though did it and would you like to see what your generosity with someone else's money bought?"

Minerva and Albus were dragged over to the cupboard under the stairs where the now clearly angry man ripped the door right off its hinges and locks, "This was Harry Potter's bedroom for ten years, bedroom is probably not the proper term for somewhere you get locked in with little food while looking through the door grill at your

relatives stuffing their faces. Are you proud of your achievements here Dumbledore, perhaps we could add it on to your illustrious list of titles? Right after Order of Merlin First Class it could read meddlesome fool who allowed child abuse on the boy who saved us all.”

Minerva was on her knees weeping at the stick drawings done in crayon on the wall, a man and woman had a child standing between them and all were holding hands. The drawings were labelled with a child's scrawl 'mummy', 'daddy' and 'Harry' was in the middle. “I warned you, I repeatedly warned you, how could you do this to that little boy?” She was sobbing and while the first part was aimed at Albus the Dursleys were definitely included in the last part.

“It was for the greater good,” whispered Albus. All his carefully laid plans had just gone up in smoke, he could feel the wards were down and with the Dursleys being evicted there was no way to repair them.

“Who are you to decide the greater good for the last scion of the ancient and noble house of Potter?”

The old wizard was starting to get seriously pissed off at this man when he had more important things to deal with, like finding Harry. “I am Albus Dumbledore, Chief...”

He didn't get to say any more as the man interrupted his spiel, “I am well aware of the many titles you currently hold and I am also aware that none of them gives you the right to make decisions for the current head of the Potter family. You are both trespassing here and I would ask you both to leave now.”

“I am the magical guardian of Harry Potter and will not be leaving until I find out where he is, and you still haven't told me your name!”

“Just because you say something doesn't make it true no matter how much you wish for it or steps you take to try and force it. My name is Griphook and I'm in charge of the Potter vaults as well as legal and financial advisor to the current Lord Potter.”

“You're a goblin?”

“And you’re a wizard, now that we’ve got that cleared away I must ask you again to leave my client’s property.”

“Harry can’t take up his inheritance yet, he’s too young.”

Griphook was having none of Dumbledore’s attempts to block what must be done here today, “Under certain conditions he can, we at Gringotts are quite happy to state that those conditions have been met.”

“I was appointed his magical guardian by the Wizengamot and won’t allow this to proceed any further.”

“You took Harry away from his legal guardian and sent him here to this hell, that guardian was then illegally imprisoned in Azkaban by the same body that appointed you guardian in his place. We at Gringotts don’t recognise your right of guardianship and neither do the Potter vaults, which is why you couldn’t remove the deeds to this house after purchasing it.”

Vernon Dursley was quiet as all the pieces fell into place and reality hit him harder than being tackled in Kings Cross Station. Had he been magical Vernon would have wholeheartedly embraced the pureblood philosophy as he was a firm believer in the class system that had seen the British Empire straddle the globe. He was good at his job because he could play the system, knowing when to kowtow and who to push in the quest to ascend the social ladder of life.

He was unknowingly dealt a royal flush but now was going to be royally screwed because he really did put his ace in a hole, or the cupboard under the stairs to be exact.

Jenkins mentioned his spinster aunt’s OBE at least once a day while he had an actual lord staying under his roof, and not just any lord but the one who owned the entire company. Vernon had not only held the winning hand but an unbeatable hand with which he could have ruled the company and moved into an entirely different social circle. The fact that his nephew could perform magic was no longer a

consideration, commoners were freaks but the nobility were eccentrics.

He had held the power in his hands and pissed it all away over some petty hatred of what the boy was, whatever Vernon's punishment it could never match him imagining what might have been and how he'd lost it forever.

Vernon was drawn out of his musings when the man in the suit addressed him directly, "Mr Dursley you are currently in possession of a company car, as your employment contract with Grundings has been terminated please hand over the keys."

Petunia braced herself for the eruption that never occurred, her husband meekly handed over the keys before astonishing his wife. "Please inform Lord Potter that we wish him well for the future,"

Vernon didn't know it but that statement just saved his family many thousands of pounds, he had signed an agreement that allowed Lord Potter to charge the Dursleys rent for living there eleven years for free. Griphook had been given a lot of leeway from Harry in how severe their punishment should be; losing their house, job and car would do for now with the rest being held in reserve if needed later. The Dursleys had been neutralised as a sleepy pyjama-clad Dudley followed his bed down the stairs, wondering what the hell was going on.

Dumbledore though had had enough and drew his wand, "I demand you tell me where Mr Potter is at once, he needs protecting."

Griphook dropped the glamour and drew his sword, "I couldn't agree more that Lord Potter needs protection but I think he needs it from you, he was placed in your care from the first of September and was nearly killed on multiple occasions. Your unbelievable presumption that only you can offer him the protection he needs doesn't stand up to the most basic of scrutiny. You are currently standing in Lord Potter's property pointing your wand at a Gringotts representative who's undertaking official duties for his client, none of the titles you are so fond of brandishing give you that right or will save you should a spell leave your wand."

The removal men had also dropped their glamour's as Albus found himself facing a plethora of goblin blades, each easily sharp enough to shave his whiskers off in an instant.

Dumbledore actually began to feel fear, not at the blades but more that Harry knew the prophecy, had discovered his heritage and clearly had the goblins on his side. He wasn't supposed to be independent and resourceful, at this rate Albus wouldn't be needed and that was unacceptable to the headmaster.

He pocketed his wand before assisting his depute back onto her feet then spoke to the Dursleys, "What will you do now?"

It was Vernon who answered without taking his eyes off the blades that thankfully weren't directed at him or his family, "We will stay with my sister which should give us time to get organised."

Albus nodded and helped Minerva out the door; they had an appointment with the dentists.

-oOoOo-

Ron Weasley came down the stairs for breakfast supporting green hair and blue freckles sending Molly into a rant, "Fred, George can't you lay off your brother? He's had a traumatic experience with his friend turning on him and doesn't need you doing the same. Why didn't you both protect him at Hogwarts?"

"Well mother dear, when you insult the wizard that just defeated you-know-who for at least the second time, then we think he got off lightly."

"Not to mention every witch in Hogwarts wants to kill him."

"Especially our three chasers as he cost us the best seeker we ever had."

"And don't forget Granger, a first year ripping McGonagall a new one was a sight never to be forgotten."

“So we’re just toughening little Ronnikins up for Hogwarts.”

“With the whole of Gryffindor.”

“And every witch in the castle after his blood.”

“He’s in for a very bumpy second year.”

Molly’s gaze shifted to her colourful youngest son, trapping him like an insect in amber, “Why did you lie to me? I wondered why Minerva was giving me funny looks yesterday when I was complaining about your treatment.”

Ron’s head was down and no sound was passing his lips, there was no point in trying to get any sense from the twins which only left one option.

“Percy I want to know what happened and I want it straight, just the facts will do.”

Percy cleared his throat as if he was about to pass judgement at the Wizengamot, “Ron apparently congratulated Potter on finding a practice girlfriend until something better looking came along, he then asked if he could aid Ron in the same quest but with the condition that the said witch couldn’t be too ugly. Considering that Potter fought a fully grown mountain troll in defence of his now girlfriend I find myself in reluctant agreement with Fred and George, Ron got off lightly.”

Molly rubbed her temples as the ramifications of her youngest son’s actions played in her head; he’d been best friends with the most wealthy, famous, rich, powerful, millionaire, single wizard in the country and had a young sister who drooled at the mention of Harry’s name. She was aware Ron was the poorest of her sons when it came to academics but she didn’t think he was this bloody thick, Molly would have to do a grovel to get her girl into Potter’s company and after that, anything could happen.

Apart from the wealth, anyone who could defeat you-know-who more than once was a great addition to the family... "What did you mean by -at least the second time?"

"Oh didn't you know?"

"You-know-who has been teaching us defence all year."

"Harry killed him at the end of term."

"We thought Dumbledore would have told you."

The resulting shriek was like a sonic boom that broke glass, knocked birds out of trees and had dogs trying to cover their bleeding ears with their paws.

Throughout all this commotion the youngest Weasley had sat unnoticed and unconcerned, she'd spent the night with her Harry's jumper therefore had spent the night in Harry Potter's arms. He'd confessed his undying love to her and promised she'd never have to wear anything second hand ever again. They were to be married and their only slight disagreement had come with the naming of their children, her son would be called that over her dead body!

-oOoOo-

Harry was pacing up and down in a private room at Gringotts, Griphook had brought him up to date as soon as he'd returned from Privet Drive and Harry was quite pleased that he hadn't added penniless to the list of Dursley woes. It was the meeting that was sure to be taking place now at the Grangers that had him so on-edge, there were two dozen goblin warriors ready to portkey there at a second's notice if Hermione called for help but that was a last resort as it would force them all into hiding. He'd taught her how to sync the mirror to herself and how to contact him last night but this waiting was even more painful than the goblin growth potions he endured throughout the night.

Griphook watched the young wizard who wore his heart on his sleeve march back and forth and almost felt sorry for taking his gold this

morning, accounts of how he'd handled Dumbledore were already making their way into every corner of the bank and doing nearly as much for his reputation as being awarded the Potter finances to manage by the client now in front of him.

Any goblin would have forked out good gold for the opportunity to get one over on the wizards; the fact that it was Dumbledore and Griphook was being paid for his troubles elevated the goblin to a level of respect greater than he'd ever imagined obtaining. Yes he would help his young client with anything that he needed, but charging the appropriate amount of gold for the service since that was the goblin way.

Harry stopped and in one fluid motion had the now vibrating mirror in front of his eyes, desperate to find out if their plan had worked.

-oOoOo-

The doorbell went at the Granger household and the inhabitants were sure it wasn't Avon calling, all three put on their game faces as Dan went to answer the door.

Albus and a still shaken Minerva waited as Dan opened the door, "Professor McGonagall and can I assume this is Headmaster Dumbledore?" a nod was all that Dan needed, "this is brilliant, just the two people I wanted to see so thank you very much for dropping by. Please come in as I don't think this is a conversation we want to have on the doorstep."

Albus couldn't help but think this was going better than this morning, little did he know what awaited him inside.

Dan introduced Emma before offering them both seats, cups of coffee were provided though Minerva appeared as if she required something stronger.

Pleasantries over, Dan waded straight in, "Professors, perhaps you could explain to me how my daughter was nearly murdered in a bathroom by a creature that had no business being anywhere near a building full of schoolchildren?" Not giving them time to answer he

continued, "If that one's too difficult how about assigning her detention in the middle of the night to a place forbidden to all students because it's too dangerous, accompanied only by a man who was previously expelled from your school and not allowed to perform magic."

"Hagrid has my complete trust," said Dumbledore as his morning instantly went from bad to worse.

"What about your defence professor, did he have your complete trust? Didn't being possessed by a homicidal psychopath automatically disqualify him from a position where he could teach magic to children? What kind of establishment are you running?"

"Hogwarts is one of the best magical schools in the world," was Dumbledore's standard response.

"You will forgive me if I have some trouble believing that at the moment, speaking of trouble my daughter now tells me she has a boyfriend who seems to be a bloody magnet for trouble and keeps drawing her into it as well. I understand he beat another boy up so badly he needed to be hospitalised and my daughter was forced to miss the leaving feast because of it, you left two kids alone in their dorm unsupervised as punishment? I'm sorry but when I was a boy being sent to your bedroom with your girlfriend would certainly not have constituted a punishment."

Albus had no answer to that and Minerva actually looked to be still in shock from this morning's revelations, she probably couldn't have repeated a word Dan said.

Dan was winding up for his big finish, "There is nothing in the world more important to me than my daughter's safety therefore this wasn't a hard decision to make, she will not be returning to Hogwarts in September and the bloody boyfriend will get a kick up the arse if he comes anywhere near my girl again."

Hermione had been sitting quietly in the corner with her head down but this was her cue, with her hands over her face the sobbing girl

rushed from the room and the slamming of her bedroom door left no doubt of her new location.

Dan watched her depart before commenting, "She may hate me for a while but I would much rather that than see her injured or even worse."

Dumbledore's mind had kicked into top gear, here was a means to get Granger away from Harry and be totally blameless into the bargain. He could string the Gangers along awaiting his signature while using their daughter as bait to catch the troublesome little shit, if he wanted a girlfriend then Molly's daughter or someone like Hannah Abbot would be pressed into service, meek and easily controllable.

Adopting his kindest grandfather persona Dumbledore replied, "While it saddens me greatly to see a student of your daughter's potential leave Hogwarts I cannot in all honesty say I blame you, I shall make arrangements to have the appropriate documents drawn up and will get them to you as soon as possible."

Dan slapped 'the appropriate documents' straight onto Dumbledore's lap, "I think you will find these in order Headmaster, we'd planned a holiday touring Europe and this will now include choosing a new school for our daughter. She had all the information already in her trunk, apparently love's young dream had even considered running away together. Thankfully our daughter had more sense than to take off along with him though after meeting the boy's Uncle I can't help but wonder what my daughter sees in the lad. The sooner we get her away from this Potter boy the happier I'll feel."

Dumbledore was trapped into signing, he tried one last ploy. "Do you think I might speak with your daughter about Mr Potter's disappearance, we really are quite worried about him?"

It was Emma who answered, "I really don't think that's a good idea, he asked her to run away with him and when she refused he left her on the train. We found her crying and being shouted at by the boy's obese uncle at the station, we've never actually met the lad and all Hermione knew was that he was going to the bank to get some

money out. We really want to draw a line under this and move on with our lives as soon as possible.”

Dumbledore signed the form and handed it to Dan who scrutinised it very carefully, “When will you be leaving?” the old wizard asked.

“As soon as we can arrange it,” answered Dan, “I want Hermione out the country as quickly as possible, her involvement with this boy ends today.”

Dumbledore wished them well before taking Minerva by the hand and asked permission to use their enclosed back garden to apparate away.

Hermione came back down the stairs but her father still had his serious face on, “Hermione we’ve got your freedom back which means you can go to school anywhere in the world, I know you like Harry but this is your future we’re dealing with here and hard decisions may have to be made.”

“Dad...”

“No Hermione, you need to listen. You may be mature for your years but you’re still a child and our responsibility, we should never have sent you to a school we couldn’t even bloody see. Where you go next is going to be a decision that we as a family will decide, I’m not discounting Harry’s option but you will be going where we think will be best for you, do I make myself clear?”

Two genuine tears made their way down Hermione’s cheeks, “Dad, what I was trying to say was that my mirror was active, I contacted Harry from my room and he just heard every word you said.”

The silence that followed was only broken by Harry calling Hermione’s name from the mirror, she lifted it up to talk to him.

“Listen Hermione, I agreed with every word your father said, I only wish I had someone who had my best interests at heart helping me. I’m delighted that everything went brilliant this morning and your dad must be one hell of an actor to pull that off.”

Dan was actually relieved; he'd never intended to hurt Hermione as causing his daughter's tears burned like acid into his heart. "Thanks for understanding Harry and supplying the documents was a great help, you should have seen the look on his face when I dropped that bombshell into his lap. I don't think your headmaster has had a good morning."

"Thank you Mr Granger now just how fast can you be ready to leave? I still don't trust them and Griphook will handle all the travel and accommodation issues, you need to get away before they start becoming desperate. So far they've stayed within the law but the longer I'm missing the less likely that is to remain the case."

It was Emma who answered, "Harry, we can't let you do that. We're more than capable of paying our way."

"Mrs Granger my inheritance has so much in it I will probably need a month just to read it all, if you wish you could pay me back by giving me some advice since I've never even set foot in a hotel before and now I find myself owning quite a few."

Hermione had herself back under control, "Listen Potter, your job is to make sure the 'Harry option' is so good that these two moaning Minnie's have no room whatsoever for a complaint, you understand!" Her brilliant smile removed any hint of malice and even had her parents laughing.

A beaming Harry responded in kind, "Yes dear, as usual my brilliant girlfriend is once more correct. Keep this mirror with you at all times and let me know the minute you're ready to go, we think the best thing to do would be to book you into a London Hotel and then have you set to fly out next day. Anything else can be worked out when we meet, I can't believe how much I'm missing you and it's only been one day."

Hermione was feeling the exact same way and nothing would part her from this mirror, "When do you think it will be safe enough to meet?"

“Not soon enough but I don’t want to say anymore because it would appear we’re up against more than we thought, apparently I have a godfather who’s been in prison without a trial since the day after my parents were murdered. I have letters here proving he was innocent of at least one of the crimes he was never actually charged with and a goblin legal team are working on it at the moment. The problem being the people who put him in there are all still around and hold powerful positions in the government and there’s nothing these people hate more than having their mistakes pointed out to them. The justice system seems to work along similar lines as their press, gold and influence wins over the truth at every turn.”

“You be careful Harry, just thinking of you being dragged back to Hogwarts without me there to keep you out of trouble is breaking my heart. I don’t want our only contact for the next few years to be these wonderful mirrors so, as much as I want to see you, do not take any unnecessary risks please.”

“I won’t, be sure to say ‘Hi’ to Hedwig for me or she’ll be nipping my ears the next time I see her.”

When they ended the call Hermione noticed the big smile on her mother’s face but it was the concern she saw on her father’s that had her worried.

Hermione’s casual mention of ‘years’ had hit Dan as hard as her very serious boyfriend remark and left him at rather a loss on how to proceed. Here was this boy who got into scrapes but risked his life protecting his daughter, had committed the ultimate act of irresponsibility by running away yet appeared the most mature and responsible twelve-year-old he’d ever spoken to, apart from Hermione of course. His home life was horrid yet he was a Lord, a bloody prince if Hermione was to be believed who’d just offered to take care of their summer holidays. The boy was an enigma who Dan couldn’t wait to meet but they would have to see about binging their holiday plans forward first, whoever was giving Harry his advice had been right on the money so far and if he was worried that they should get out of there then Dan would be a fool not to take that seriously and Daniel Granger was nobody’s fool.

-oOoOo-

All the way back to Hogwarts Minerva had refused to speak to him; Albus left her at the entrance hall and made his way up to his office. Unfortunately there was no respite waiting for him there either, just a howler from an extremely upset Molly Weasley who promised a personal visit later on that day. In his chart of shitty days this one was already top ten and that promised visit had the potential to push it into the top three. Just occasionally Albus wished he was addicted to something a bit stronger than his lemon drops.

-oOoOo-

The Grangers entered a different world from the moment their car drew up to the Ritz, they were greeted by people who parked the car, dealt with their luggage and the manager led them right passed the desk and strait into an elevator. When they got to their assigned suite with views onto Piccadilly Circus followed by an introduction to their private butler, the obvious elegance and opulence on casual display had the three Grangers glancing at one another in disbelief.

No sooner were they alone when Emma had to let rip, “Jesus Hermione if your boyfriend is trying to impress us then you can tell him he succeeded big time, how can that young lad possibly afford this?”

“That’s easy, I own the hotel. Hello Mr and Mrs Granger I’m...”

“HARRY!” was shouted from the smallest Granger who was a blur as she launched herself at her boyfriend.

Hermione was entangled with Harry, kissing him as though they’d been apart for years when a noise behind them reminded her of what she’d just done.

She released Harry and muttered “Oh Shit!” before springing back and lifting Hedwig’s cage from where she’d dropped the poor bird at the first sign of her boyfriend.

“Oh Hedwig girl I’m so sorry but I know you’ll understand because we both love him so much, don’t we girl?”

It was after this admission that a seriously red-faced young wizard was left to complete the introductions to his girlfriend’s astonished parents, “Hi I’m Harry Potter!”

A/N thanks for reading.

Chapter 4

Awkward didn't even begin to describe the situation that Harry was faced with; gathering all his courage he stuck out his hand and thankfully Mr Granger shook it. Mrs Granger was a different matter as he discovered where Hermione had learned her hug technique, "Pleased to finally meet the boy who saved my daughter's life though the location could have been a bit more romantic."

"Mrs Granger by the time that Troll had finished you could hardly tell what the room had once been; I still find it hard to believe we walked away from that uninjured."

A certain snowy owl was suddenly on his shoulder and almost butting heads with the boy, "Hello girl, did you miss me? We should be together soon."

Hermione returned and had her arm around Harry with her head placed on his free shoulder, it was a pretty powerful image and Dan knew they were in trouble.

He now understood Hermione's comment about their magic giving them a push as his bookworm daughter was never this demonstrative with emotions yet looked so at home with her boyfriend's arm around her. The sight of the witch, wizard and his familiar was so potent that even the non-magical Grangers could see the bonds between the three and their daughter's unknowing declaration of love suddenly didn't seem so ludicrous.

"Harry you've grown and put on some weight, no glasses?" asked Hermione, still holding Harry.

"The goblins have been an immense help, they were so peeved at what Dumbledore had done they're helping me for cost. I have no idea what that means but it seemed like a great honour so I graciously accepted; do you know what that means?"

It was Emma who answered, "It means basically that they're charging you their lowest price Harry, that's only usually done for special customers."

“Well apparently Dumbledore repeatedly tried to gain access to the Potter vaults but was denied, the vaults let him buy the house and business because I was living with the Dursleys but wouldn’t allow him to get his mitts on the deeds.”

Their assigned butler appeared, “My Lord, tea is served in the sitting room.”

They made their way into another part of the suite to find tea, sandwiches and cakes waiting for them, Hermione was trying not to laugh at her boyfriend’s reaction to being addressed as ‘my Lord’ though Harry got some payback when he held his girlfriend’s chair for her to be seated and said ‘my Lady’.

None of this byplay was missed by Dan who was looking at Hermione as if she was a different girl to the one he’d known all her life. “Can you tell us some of what you found out at the bank?” he asked.

“There were letters from my parents that answered some of my questions, they had been in hiding from Voldemort and were betrayed but not by the man in prison for the crime. Our friend Neville’s parents were also some of the people Hermione and I saw in an album but the goblins told me they were attacked and lost their minds, they’ve been in hospital for as long as I was at the Dursleys. The same photo was in the vault and anyone else in the picture can go to hell as far as I’m concerned, we’re trying to get my godfather a trial but the rest of them have no excuse for abandoning me to my relatives. We have to do it quietly though or Griphook reckons my godfather will be used as a bargaining chip to force me back into Hogwarts.”

A thoughtful Dan asked the question both of them had been dreading, “Would Hermione be a bargaining chip?”

He could see the look of fear in Hermione’s eyes as Harry shook his head, “I will not lie Hermione, we discussed this on our mirrors last night and will just have to take our chances. Mr and Mrs Granger, your daughter is terrified that once you know the truth then you will take her away and we won’t see each other again until she’s seventeen.”

“Why seventeen?” asked Emma.

“Seventeen is the age she becomes an adult in the magical world, Hermione would never run away from you and I wouldn’t let her damage what I’ve wanted my whole life. Hermione is the first person ever to give me a hug, she was my first kiss and her admission earlier is the only time someone has said they love me. Hermione is the most important thing in the world to me and should anyone get their hands on her they would have my complete and undivided attention, Hermione isn’t a chip she’s the entire game.”

Harry had to stop and take a few deep breaths before he could continue, Hermione holding his hand was a great comfort. “Voldemort is not dead, he’s gone for the moment but we’re sure he will return and I’ll be his main target again. Most of the stuff said or written about me is rubbish but everyone knows the name of my best friend, the person I would do anything for which paints a rather large target on her back. This was not a situation either of us had any control over and I’m afraid I can’t apologise for knowing Hermione.”

This earned Harry a kiss on the cheek from his nervous girlfriend, both were dreading what the Granger parents were going to say.

It was Dan who broke the silence, “We will not be rushing into any decisions here so you can both relax for now, we all seem to have the safety of a certain young lady at the top of our agenda. Ok Harry, you’ve had time to mull this over so I would like to hear your thoughts, dreams and plans.”

“I plan to live sir, my parents hid themselves away and died so I could live, I owe it to them to live my life to the fullest and intend on doing that. My plan is to learn and train so that when I’m old enough I will have a chance to end it once and for all. People in the magical world are terrified of Voldemort and won’t even say his name so it will come down to me or him though hopefully not for many years.”

Emma was happy to let her husband handle the questioning though she did smile at the kids, trying to disperse the atmosphere of interrogation rather than chat.

“What can we do about Hermione being a target?”

“Sir I don’t want her on the same continent as that monster, if he finds us my number one priority will be getting her to safety. Once she reaches seventeen I don’t think any of us are going to have a say in what she does.”

Hermione smiled at her boyfriend and tried to allay her parent’s fears, “I want to train with Harry and be the best that I can, when the time comes that he has to face that monster I would like to be at his side but only if I was good enough and over seventeen.”

“You don’t intend to go looking for him Harry?”

“No sir, if I never saw him again it would be too soon. He’ll come for me or send people after me then, depending whether I’m ready or not, I’ll either fight or try and escape to train some more. I’m only twelve on my birthday and probably wouldn’t survive a fight with an adult wizard never mind Voldemort in a new body, it’s going to take a good few years before that changes. Knowing that I didn’t think it would be practical to hide away in some cabin in the wilderness, shutting myself off from the world. My plan is to do the exact opposite and enjoy everything that life has to offer. I want to attend concerts, visit museums and art galleries, spend Saturday afternoon’s browsing through bookstores and picnicking in the park on Sundays. All those things would be so much better with Hermione by my side but I would completely understand if you didn’t think it was safe enough.”

Emma took pity on the boy who was almost pleading with them now, “Harry I’m assuming that these picnics will not be taking place in Britain? Can you give us any details?”

“I’m sorry Mrs Granger but I really don’t want to say anything at all about the location but I would be happy to take you there after dinner tonight.”

Emma got a slight nod from her husband before answering, “That sounds like a plan to us but I’d like to ask a small favour, since I was

a little girl I've dreamt of flying on a broom – could I fly with you sometime?”

Harry didn't need to answer, his smile lit up the room.

-oOoOo-

Albus was eating lunch and contemplating his woes when inspiration struck, he was being lambasted for his choice of defence professor last year and needed to divert attention away so he could concentrate on the more important issue, the hunt for Potter. He had been thinking that Hogwarts needed a high profile name that was beyond reproach, someone who could change these howlers into letters of congratulations, a wizard who has an adoring public and lots of books to sell to impressionable children with compulsory book lists.

This Eureka moment was a great relief to the old wizard who had almost begun to question himself after Potter running away and Minerva's refusal to even speak with him but his idea of having a world famous wizard teaching the students of Hogwarts confirmed once again his brilliance.

An invitation signed by Albus Dumbledore and delivered by Fawkes should be enough for the vain wizard to be interested, subtly pointing out that each professor gets to set their own required book list should seal the deal and he would even get paid into the bargain.

Albus wouldn't be surprised if fights broke out when the announcement was made as all the mothers currently sending him howlers diverted that energy into trying to get closer to Hogwarts newest professor.

-oOoOo-

The Grangers had returned from dinner to find Harry had returned and was once more waiting in their suite; he'd politely declined their offer of eating in the suite because they didn't want to arouse suspicion in case they were being watched. It was only with great reluctance that Hermione had agreed and Harry had left to get some business dealt with.

After receiving his now customary greeting from his girlfriend Harry spoke to her parents, "Mr and Mrs Granger, I have a gift here for Hermione but I wanted to explain it to you both first. It's a gift that provides protection from curses and a means of magically escaping from any situation."

All three Grangers had the breath taken from them as Harry took out a diamond pendant and placed it around Hermione's neck, "Take your wand and touch the jewel then say a password that will transport you to safety. Make it something that you won't use by mistake or it could be rather embarrassing if you just disappeared in the middle of a conversation."

"Harry is that real?" asked Emma.

"I know nothing of jewellery Ma'am and the pendant came from my family vault but Griphook assures me this provides the wearer with the strongest protections available which is all that matters."

Dan was positive that was a genuine diamond and though their income was nearer the top end of the scale there was no way in hell he could have afforded something like that for his wife far less twelve-year-old Hermione.

She placed the tip of her wand against the diamond and said, "Thunderbirds are go!" which got a chuckle out of Harry. "Where will this take me?"

"You will be portkeyed instantly into Gringotts and the office of my accounts manager, trust Griphook with your life because he can make any arrangements needed for your safety."

Dan was mesmerized as the light played off the jewel but the sparkle in his daughter's eyes easily outshone the mere diamond, her boyfriend had truly pushed the boundaries of the perfect gift. It was already said that diamonds were a girl's best friend but this one actually surpassed that as it kept Hermione safe and gave a means of escape that greatly improved her father's peace of mind.

Harry put his arms around Hermione, "You have to promise me that you'll never take it off, the portkey will only work if it's touching your skin."

Hermione just nodded, who could say no to those green eyes.

Harry eventually remembered her parents were standing watching them and reluctantly let Hermione go, he reached into his pocket when Emma interrupted him.

"You pull another diamond out of there and my mind is already made up," she joked but could see instantly that it had backfired.

It was a red faced Harry who answered her, "It was my intention to provide you both with means of protection and emergency escape, I didn't want to do it straight away in case you thought I was trying to buy my way to your decision."

Emma could see that she'd really embarrassed the boy who had no frame of reference for being teased, she gave the lad a reassuring hug. "Harry I was just teasing, Dan and I will both sleep better at night knowing Hermione now has her own personal escape diamond that looks at least three or four carats."

"Griphook said it was seven but I was reaching for the portkey to take us to our hideout." Harry didn't notice how both Granger parents reacted to the news of the diamond, he just assumed it was fear of portkeys and proceeded to explain how they worked. Harry was using one to get from here to Griphook's office and thought it was great.

Everyone held on to the piece of rope and Harry touched it with his wand resulting in four people sitting on a floor while looking through a massive window at one of the most recognisable icons in the world.

"Harry if this was supposed to be a secret then I'm afraid I know where we are," her tone was half joking but laced with undeniable awe for the fact that they'd just travelled across the Atlantic Ocean in practically no time at all. She couldn't help but ponder on the thought that they certainly wouldn't be the first people to flee their country in the face of evil to gaze upon 'Lady Liberty', there might be a more

powerful symbol of freedom in the world but she couldn't think of one at the moment.

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Minerva McGonagall was at a crossroads in her life, she'd blindly trusted a wizard who'd allowed a young child to be abused. Her life at the moment was filled with what if's as she tried to steer it back onto a course where she could look at herself in the mirror without wanting to be sick.

She'd remained friendly with Lily and James after they'd graduated and remembered Harry as a bright, bubbly baby. The young man who appeared at Hogwarts last September bore none of those characteristics and if it wasn't for the fact his parentage could be determined by a mere glance she would have wondered if this really was their son.

Harry was so shy to the point of being introverted but his friendship with Hermione seemed to be solving that problem at an amazing pace. Their other friend Ronald appeared quite happy to be anchored into his childhood by an overbearing mother who was determined not to let her children grow up. This more than anything had led to the inevitable split as the maturing pair simply outgrew the red head that was holding them back.

Minerva loved teaching and didn't think she was being boastful when she said she was good at it but Hogwarts had ceased to be a school and become almost a social experiment for Dumbledore to amuse himself with. There was Severus whose bias was encouraged rather than reprimanded while Sybil's tea leaves predicted enough disasters to have the school closed down annually. Now he was employing a wizard who spent more money on beauty products than all the witches teaching in the castle combined. Once again her inner self was telling her this wouldn't end well.

It had taken two twelve-year-olds to point out the error of her ways, Miss Granger that night in the dorm and Mr Potter by running away, leaving Minerva facing some hard questions and difficult decisions.

Dumbledore's inability to even consider he might not know what's best for everyone was at the very centre of the problem, he seemed to have some master plan where people were moulded into the part he wanted them to play. Minerva was sure that if her father was still alive he would have been extremely disappointed in the way she'd become the headmaster's lapdog, blindly carrying out his orders even when she knew them to be wrong.

Quite simply she couldn't be that witch any more and be able to live with herself, Hogwarts had been her home but now felt like her prison and fully understood Mr Potter's actions. She just hoped he managed to stay out of Dumbledore's clutches long enough to have some life, tears were falling onto the parchment as she penned her resignation to the board of governors. After all her years teaching she had a bit of gold saved so could afford to take some time figuring out which direction her life was now going to take, her only set criteria was that it be opposite to the path chosen by Albus Dumbledore.

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Dan Granger sat on a terrace drinking a glass of fantastic wine as the sun set over the harbour and the lights of New York provided one of the most recognisable skylines on the planet, there couldn't be many people who wouldn't recognise the Statue of Liberty. Dan was trying not to chuckle at the audacity of the plan Harry and the goblins had devised as well as being slightly overwhelmed at the thought that magic could hide an entire floor of a five star hotel so that it couldn't even be seen from the outside.

Apparently they would not be able to remember it when they left unless told the address by Harry, now that was powerful magic.

"Harry did you have this done especially for your needs or was there always a magically hidden floor in this hotel?" asked Emma

"My family did a lot of business in the muggle world and, unlike other purebloods who want nothing to do with it, were very comfortable using the best that both had to offer. The hidden floor has been here since the hotel was built though I had it adapted to include a gym, training room and potions lab."

“One of our biggest worries has been that we would lose Hermione to a world we know nothing about but you appear determined to stay rooted in our world, was that a conscious decision or is it just a case of hiding in a place they wouldn’t think to search for you.”

“Mrs Granger the magical world is steeped in pureblood traditions that do nothing but hold it back, quills and parchment, owl post, candles and betrothal contracts.”

“Betrothal?” squeaked Hermione.

“Yes, there are currently nine contracts with my name on them at Gringotts, offering all sorts of enticements to marry certain witches that are going to be disappointed.”

Dan couldn’t help but laugh at the lad’s predicament, “Do I need to get pen and paper out Harry?”

“No sir, I’m pretty sure that your daughter feels the same way I do, when we choose to get married it will be because we’ve found the person that we want to spend the rest of our lives with, not some business arrangement. I’m also pretty sure that Mrs and Miss Granger would throw you over the balcony if you even attempted such a thing.”

“Oh I don’t know Harry I might even thank him if he picked the right wizard.” Hermione kissed his cheek while her mother couldn’t contain her laughter as her husband’s joke had rebounded on him and left the poor man gulping down his wine.

“To answer your question Mrs Granger I have known about magic for less than a year and tend to consider myself a muggle who can perform magic rather than a wizard. My intention is to follow my family’s tradition of taking the best that both worlds have to offer, both Hermione and I know people who would be terrified if placed in a big city so that was also behind my thinking for coming here.”

“I must admit it would be a relief to be able to pick up the phone and talk to her not to mention being able to come here for a few days now and then, we really missed Hermione last year.”

Harry could see Mrs Granger liked the idea of Hermione being here so decided now might be the right time to push a little in his attempt at a yes, “I would be delighted if you wished to join us here, as you can see accommodation isn’t a problem and I’ll bet New York needs dentists just as much as Crawley.”

Emma couldn’t help but smile at the sweet boy, “Harry there are all sorts of regulations to be sorted through and setting up a practice here would cost a fortune, it’s a nice idea but just not practical at the moment.”

Harry handed her a couple of documents that rendered her speechless while peaking Dan’s interest, he took them out of his wives trebling hand and couldn’t believe what he was looking at, “Where the hell did you get these? How is this even possible?”

Harry was tempted to say ‘magic’ but wisely decided now was not the time for flippancy, “Those are genuine green cards allowing you to work here and I have a list of property that would be available for you to set up a practice. I would quite happily give you the money needed to start the business or we could do it as a loan - but at cost of course.”

Emma was hugging the life out of Harry before he even realised she’d moved, “Hermione, anyone who’d do that for his girlfriend is a very serious boyfriend and a definite keeper!”

Dan was still trying to wrap his head around the whole thing, “Harry how do you know all these things? How is this possible?”

“Sir I know nothing of business but that’s why I have Griphook, the goblins are geniuses at business stuff and nothing is impossible for the right price. I can set up a meeting where he can go over the many options available to you. That’s what he does with me, I tell him what I want or what the problem is and he provides options for me to choose from. He’s one of the few people in my life that I know I can

trust, yes I pay for the advice but that's just the goblin's way of life. He also invests my fortune wisely ensuring I have more than enough money to pay for that advice and since he also receives a percentage of the profits he makes me then everyone is happy."

"It's just a pity we have that flight to France tomorrow, I would really like to meet this Griphook as soon as possible." Dan's words received an enthusiastic nod from his wife and enthusiastic didn't come close to describing Hermione's reaction to her parent's unspoken consent.

Harry found himself with his second Granger girl wrapped around him in as many minutes though this one was trying to kiss him senseless at the same time, when she came up for air her reaction was pure Hermione and helped with her parent's unease at the sight of their daughter kissing, there would be some talks taking place before they moved in here.

"Oh Harry have you any idea how many bookstores there are in New York? When will we start our tuition and meet the professors?"

Harry held up his hand to prevent the thousand more questions he knew she was desperate to ask, "Jake!"

The butler from earlier appeared, "Yes my Lord?"

"The Grangers are going to be staying with us so can we lose the disguise?"

The butler morphed into a house elf wearing a robe with the Potter crest prominently displayed, "Jake is a house elf, he and his wife Sophie will be taking care of us while we live here. What's with the 'my lord' I thought we had agreed that it was to be just Harry?"

"No my Lord, you agreed while I pointed out that it wouldn't be proper behaviour for a house elf. Am I to assume that we require three replacement Grangers for tomorrow?"

"Yes please and tell Griphook that we will meet tomorrow afternoon to sort out a lot of the details." Jake gave a formal bow before disappearing right in front of their eyes.

Hermione's eyebrows were raised so high with unanswered questions that they almost melted into her bushy hair, "Replacement Grangers?"

"There will be three people who will appear identical to you that will board a plane tomorrow, once they're in France they will simply transform back to their normal selves and the Grangers will have disappeared. Anyone watching will see you boarding and leaving the plane placing you three firmly in Europe. We can use the same method to provide sightings where and when it suits us keeping all their attention focused on Europe and away from here."

Dan shook his head in admiration, "I'm looking forward to meeting this Griphook even more now and thanking him for helping keep my family safe."

"What about all our stuff in London?" his girlfriend asked.

"As soon as you decided to stay here Jake and Sophie placed all your stuff in your new rooms, anything you need from home can also be fetched, house elves are at their happiest when they're helping people and these two have been desperately waiting to work for years."

"Don't they have any children?" Emma couldn't believe the boys face could go that shade of red; he'd kissed their daughter right in front of them but looked mortified at her simple question.

"Their law dictates that they must gain the head of their house's permission to have children, it was the first thing they asked me. I said yes and have already got Griphook looking for a way to throw that law out."

"Are they slaves Harry?" he could see the horror in Hermione's eyes at the very thought.

"No Hermione they get paid though Dumbledore blocked it, both have just received their back money and a raise."

Dan couldn't help it, he was howling with laughter at Harry's discomfort. This was the first time he'd seen him acting like a kid, "If they've got eleven years back money and permission to start a family then it's a good job your mother can cook as I don't think we'll be seeing them anytime soon."

Emma joined her husband's laughter, not because she thought the joke was funny but at the kids' reaction to it as Hermione's face now matched Harry's for colour.

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Hermione felt like a princess as she looked around the room she'd woken in and almost had to pinch herself for assurance that it was real. Room really didn't do this justice as her four poster bed appeared small in relation to the rest of the space; she had a dressing room and a bathroom to die for while the large glass doors opened onto her own private balcony with a telescope for looking over the harbour.

There was also her own sitting room complete with hi-fi and TV with another section set up for studying that had a computer with attached printer, no more parchment and quills for her.

When she glanced at her sitting room she was reminded of being sat down there last night by her mother for a woman to woman chat.

"Hermione from what your father and I have seen of Harry he seems a very nice boy but we're worried about your level of intimacy and think you're too involved for your age."

"Mum even you have to admit that the last few days have been pretty dramatic, our need for contact would appear to increase with the situation, we were both worried that you and dad would keep us apart for whatever reason and this has turned out better than we could have dreamed. I get my parents, my boyfriend and lessons in magic while staying in a five star hotel in New York. Harry and I hug a lot because he's never had that in his life and it's my way of letting him know that I'm there for him, once things settle down to our new normal so will our relationship."

"We're just worried dear that you're moving to fast, there are all different stages of a relationship and to be honest my concern is that anything Harry asked you to do would receive an automatic yes, I've never seen you behave like this before."

Hermione could see where her mother's concern was coming from so decided to be brutally honest, "Mum you're right, if Harry asked me I probably would say yes but what you have to understand is Harry would never ask, I'm dating a boy who gives me a fabulous diamond to keep me safe and then makes arrangements so I won't have to worry about my parents and he still thinks he's the lucky one. When our relationship moves to the next level it will be because I think it's time and Harry will probably have to be talked into it for fear of upsetting me but that won't be for a while yet. When Harry's hands eventually make it up my jumper I want him to find something there that makes the journey worthwhile, not the couple of beestings I have at the moment. I hope to be pure on my wedding night and pray that it's Harry there with me but if things with Voldemort turn bad then I would go to Harry and offer whatever I am to help him."

Hermione had verbalised thoughts that had been lurking in the deepest recesses of her mind and felt both drained yet cleansed by speaking them out loud.

Emma held her daughter in a hug while her brain tried to edit that last statement into a format she could tell Dan that wouldn't result in Harry's body being found on the sidewalk in the morning. "You were serious when you said that you loved him?"

"It's hard to describe mum, it's like Harry owns a piece of me and I'm only complete when he's near. The wonderful thing is Harry feels the exact same way but doesn't know how to put it into words, he tells me though every time he hugs or kisses me in a way that no words ever could. Had we been separated our mirrors may have kept us sane but the pain would have been there, you said I would do anything Harry asked and if he'd wanted me to run away with him I'm not sure I could have said no. With this set-up we would never have been found but Harry wouldn't even consider it, all his life he's dreamed of having a family and wouldn't take me away from mine for his benefit.

That's Harry James Potter, my boyfriend and those other witches can take their betrothal contracts and use them for toilet paper because he's mine."

Emma detected the first hint of doubt from her daughter and held her tighter, "Anyone can see he's yours honey which is what's got your father all riled up, he wanted to go and have a talk with Harry but I don't think that would be appropriate since we've only just met. You might want to have a word with Harry though as delaying tactics is all I've got at the moment, some boy is trying to steal his little princess's heart and he doesn't care if the boy's a Lord, he's still not good enough as far as your father is concerned."

Hermione was drawn from her musing by Sophie popping into her room and laying out her clothes for today, "Would my Lady prefer a bath or shower before breakfast?"

"I usually have a shower Sophie and why the 'my Lady'?"

Sophie's tone was that of a mother answering a child's stupid question, "Are you not Lord Potter's Lady? Breakfast will be served in thirty minutes." She popped out the room leaving a very thoughtful Hermione Granger behind; she just hoped her father accepted the elves explanation without an explosion.

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Dumbledore watched on as his former friend of many years left Hogwarts for the last time, she still refused to speak with him but at the moment Filius and Pomona were making up for the deficit by berating Albus at every opportunity. Both were positive that the headmaster was directly responsible for their friend's resignation with subsequent departure and Albus was at least grateful Minerva had kept her reasons private.

In the meantime it had taken all of his considerable persuasive powers to stop Filius also resigning with Pomona's reaction not far behind him; Albus was beginning to wonder if there was a conspiracy in place to prevent him searching for the Potter boy as all he had managed to accomplish so far was to have the Grangers followed.

He now needed to find a new transfiguration professor as well as head of Gryffindor; the other vacant position was settled by the actions of Filius and Pomona. Albus needed someone he could trust implicitly and not have them ask too many questions so Severus Snape was the new Depute of Hogwarts.

A/N Thanks for reading.

in Scotland the second-in-command of an educational establishment is called the Depute, since Hogwarts is supposed to be a Scottish school this is the model I'm using. Jo Rowling's schooling was in England which has a totally different educational system.

Chapter 5

Dan Granger was sitting having a conversation with Griphook that was changing his family's lives forever and found himself once more in agreement with Harry; the goblins were brilliant at business!

Every stumbling block was quickly and easily overcome as the required documentation would appear out of thin air as another regulation would have its box ticked. Dan handled the business side of their practice and had a lot of dealings with financial advisors but none who were in the same league as Griphook.

It was now apparent where Harry was getting his information and decision making skills from as the goblin easily explained the available options to each specific problem but left all the final decisions to them, it was exhilarating as it was terrifying to say goodbye to their old lives and become New Yorkers.

When their business was completed Griphook produced some vintage champagne and the three of them toasted their new lives before Griphook became serious once more.

"Mr and Mrs Granger, what I'm about to discuss with you doesn't exactly come under the heading of Gringotts business but I choose to look upon my job as doing whatever I can to aid Lord Potter and its under this heading that I'm going to make some revelations that mustn't leave this room for now."

Dan and Emma were intrigued, Griphook had just spent a few hours going over every aspect of their finances and arranging every detail of their new practice including lists of suppliers and contacts at a reputable agency for hiring staff, they weren't yet at the stage where the goblin was classed as a friend but they trusted his advice and were curious to what he intended to reveal. They should have remembered what curiosity did to the cat.

"In my dealing with Lord Potter I had noticed a level of maturity that was, shall we say uncommon for one with so few years behind them which aroused my suspicions, after speaking with the Potter elf Jake and seeing Lord Potter again today my suspicions were confirmed.

Lord Potter is rapidly magically bonding with your daughter and Hermione with him, if it continues at its present pace the bond will complete within the year.”

Emma had a vague idea what this entailed as her conversation with Hermione replayed in her head but Dan was totally clueless, Griphook tried to explain just how much their lives were now altering.

“A bond like this is a rare and wonderful thing to behold, for the couple involved they will grow closer as their magic merges and in the rarest of cases a full soul bond can form. This does not require sexual intimacy though they will crave contact with each other, I noticed that they never let go of one another’s hands when they were in this office earlier and I would surmise they embrace a lot?”

Emma nodded and asked a question though she was positive she knew at least part of the answer, “What does this mean for the kids?”

“It basically means that they have found their life mate, both will never consider another and be together till the day they die. Subconsciously they both know this and their magic is helping them mature as they face up to their new responsibilities of having a partner for life, they also have the added burden of the whole Voldemort scenario so again I would surmise that it’s pushing their maturity along even further. From what I’ve been able to learn their drive to protect each other has been present for some time and you can expect any lessons or tasks to be undertaken with unwavering vigour and commitment.”

Dan was struggling with the whole concept, “Are you telling me that Harry’s going to be my son-in-law and even though my daughter’s not yet thirteen I don’t have a say in the matter?”

Griphook could see this conversation wasn’t going quite as he hoped but could only give one answer, “Yes.”

Dan was working himself up to a rant when Emma cut him off at the knees, “Daniel Granger please engage that brain you have when choosing your next words, and they may be the last anyone listens to for a while. We’ve just been told that our daughter will miss out on the

hell that is teenage dating, wondering if the boy really likes you or just trying to get into your knickers, deciding how far to go and the heartache of finding out you made the wrong choices. Instead she has a wonderful boy who thinks the entire world revolves around her and unless I'm mistaken will ask her to be Lady Potter as soon as the law allows. We have a chance to be part of that wondrous journey with you getting the son you always wanted or fight this and risk losing the daughter we've only just got back, she will obey you out of duty but you will lose both of their respect. This is the same person who's assuring the safety of our family, providing us with opportunities we'd only dreamed of as well as being the finest young man we've ever met. I would now like to hear your thoughts on the matter."

Dan recognised the 'dealing with difficult patient' voice and attempted to look at this logically, he agreed with every word his wife just said but this was his little princess so 'protective father' kept kicking the shit out of logic with the thought of some boy after his daughter. Logic's parting shot was to wonder why Griphook mentioned this which set Dan's thoughts off in a different direction.

He looked directly into the goblin's eyes, "I take it there's a good reason why you're telling us this other than to watch me squirm?"

Griphook actually laughed, he liked these muggles. "Yes there is, Lord Potter currently has nine betrothal contracts awaiting his attention as old pureblood families vie for control of the Potter fame, fortune and power. Should there be a change in government to that of a darker nature pressure could be brought to bear for Lord Potter to choose one of these 'for his own good' and to protect the bloodlines. Lord Potter would choose to relinquish everything that he has rather than be parted from his chosen life partner but my job as his advisor is to ensure that doesn't happen."

"Could they do that?"

"Mr Granger the Ministry of Magic is run along the lines of what I would think of as an exclusive golf club, yes everyone is technically equal but the real power is held in the hands of only a few. These few control just about everything and rather than having to break the law

they just change them to suit their current needs. Add to that mix nepotism, bigotry, corruption with incompetence running rife and you have a recipe for disaster which is probably as good a word as any to describe that establishment. Lord Potter's godfather has been in prison for eleven years without a trial or even charges being pressed, we now have evidence proving his innocence yet I don't hold out much hope of getting him released as that would entail some people in power accepting blame for their mistakes."

Dan felt as if his insides had been turned to ice but he needed to know, "Just what are you suggesting?"

"I'm suggesting that we head off all of this by letting Lord Potter become betrothed to the only girl he would consider for the position."

Emma had to take over the questioning as Dan appeared to have entered a catatonic state, "What exactly are the implications of a betrothal and what will it mean for Hermione?"

Griphook was trying again to phrase it in terms muggles could relate to, "The only restriction on Hermione is that she wouldn't be allowed to become emotionally involved with another boy without revoking her betrothal first, with their impending bond that's not even a consideration. Otherwise it's almost the equivalent of someone giving her their school ring; they are only saying that both are serious about each other without tying themselves down to further commitments."

This brought Dan out of his funk, he had envisaged signing Hermione's life away but this didn't sound too bad and should they end up married the decision would still be hers to make.

"The legal benefits are immense for everyone involved, Lord Potter acquires protection from being forced into a relationship while all of you then come under the protection of the Noble and Ancient House of Potter. If we do this properly it will take Dumbledore and the Ministry off the board of potential foes leaving Voldemort as the only opposition player still in the game." Griphook didn't think the father would be able to handle the news that his daughter would be considered married when the magical bond completed, the goblin decided he would give the man a chance to get better acquainted with

the young Lord before dispensing that nugget of information. The betrothal would cover his young Lord in the meantime and when the bond completed they would be faithful to each other even if one of them died.

Dan looked towards his wife for advice on a subject so far outside his comfort zone that warp factor speeds would be needed to get him there in this lifetime, "How do we handle this love, what will Hermione think?"

Emma gave him a reassuring kiss, "She will think that she has the best father in the whole wide world, our little girl is worried about these contracts and wants to be with Harry so much she set fire to a professor's robes to save him while they were just friends. Her dream is to be with Harry and us so we get a chance to make our girl's dreams come true, Harry will be harder to convince as he might think we're pushing Hermione into something she's not ready for and he won't stand for that. He may be young but his morals and ethics are every bit as strong as yours when it comes to a certain young lady."

Griphook interrupted, "I don't foresee that being as big a problem as you think, every conversation I have had with him has revolved around the safety of your daughter. If we emphasise the potential benefits in her security then Lord Potter will happily comply, he places your daughter's well being far above his own. Hermione Jean Granger is named as his next of kin and sole benefactor, should anything happen to him she will inherit over a billion."

"Sterling?" croaked Emma.

"Galleons," the goblin replied as both Grangers passed out with the shock.

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Harry and Hermione were currently in the Potter vault collecting all the books they could find to begin a library in their school / hideout / new home actually felt the best fit. Jake and Sophie were shrinking the books and placing them in a trunk for transport later.

Hermione stopped as she discovered a case full of betrothal, engagement and wedding rings; she was staring at them with longing when she felt Harry's arms encircle her from behind.

"Never doubt that one day you will have the complete set; I would happily give you the first one right this minute if I didn't think it would have your parents baying for my blood. I hope that by your birthday or at the latest Christmas they would know me well enough to accept this, you are mine my Hermione and there will never be another."

Both elves were observing this and mentally halved their initial estimate of bond completion.

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Harry and Hermione rejoined her parents with Griphook in his office and both immediately felt the tension in the room, most of which seemed to be emanating from Dan. Harry sat in a chair and Hermione joined him on his knee, both were wondering what could have gone so wrong to cause this.

Dan decided to just blurt it out, "Hermione would you like to be betrothed to Harry?"

The resulting scream pierced eardrums and had two goblin guards bursting into the room with blades drawn but their training never prepared them for situations like this, the young witch was currently wrapped around Lord Potter kissing him before exploding onto her father. After more hugs, squeals and more kisses it was her mothers turn to be attacked, when the witch turned her attentions onto Master Griphook both guards suddenly remembered pressing appointments elsewhere in the bank and beat a hasty retreat out the room. Dragons, dark wizards and bank robbers were one thing but nowhere in their contracts did it mention anything about being hugged and kissed by a young witch, that was above and beyond the call of duty.

Back inside Dan was watching his daughter treat the room like a pin ball machine as she ricochet off everyone present though did seem to linger longer with Harry, "Can I take it you approve of the idea?"

“Oh yes daddy, thank you yes!” she gushed.

“What about you Harry?”

“Mr Granger I thought it might take a while longer for you both to get to know me before I asked for permission to have Hermione as my betrothed, my answer is of course yes.”

“Oh Harry we need to go back down to your vault, I know the exact ring I want.”

“I’m sure you mean our vault and would this be the ring in question?” Harry couldn’t fail to notice the way Hermione’s gaze had kept returning to a certain ring so when she was getting ready to leave he had pocketed the pair, hoping he would need them later but never thinking they would be required as soon as this.

Hermione confirmed her soon to be betrothed had got it right by pouncing on him and almost hugging the life out of him, she was so happy she could probably out-bounce Tigger at the moment.

Griphook intruded on the proceedings, “To do this properly we need a representative from the ministry to authenticate the documents and preside over the ceremony, I have taken the liberty of inviting one of the few whose honesty and integrity I trust.”

The door opened admitting a middle aged witch whose whole persona screamed ‘don’t mess with me’, Griphook did the introductions.

“Madam Bones is head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, may I present Lord Potter, Miss Hermione Granger and her parents.”

“Lord Potter it’s a pleasure to meet you, I believe you know my niece Susan? She also attends Hogwarts.”

“Yes Madam Bones we both know Susan but neither Hermione nor I have any intention of returning to a school where they would employ Voldemort to teach their students.”

"I had heard rumours my Lord but was assured that's all they were, surely you jest?"

"He was growing out the back of Quirrell's head, which explained the turban. I spoke to him and had to kill them both in self-defence."

Bones was suddenly all business, "Why was the DMLE not informed of this?"

Harry had faced down Voldemort, Dumbledore and McGonagall; it was time to add Bones to the list. "With respect ma'am I have been kept ignorant of wizarding procedures and customs, until Griphook's introduction a minute ago I didn't know your department existed. I suggest you take the matter up with our former headmaster."

"My apologies Lord Potter if I suggested any wrong doing on your part, unfortunately the person who assured me it was a rumour was your former headmaster. Would you be willing to come down to my office and make a statement?"

"That would not be possible ma'am, my former headmaster doesn't quite know about the former part yet as he thinks he has some control over my life. I no longer live in this country and am only here today on business."

This news shocked the witch, "Can I ask you why you left Britain?"

Harry answered with a question of his own, "Can I ask if you have made any progress in granting my godfather his basic human right of a trial?"

Amelia Bones had the good grace to look embarrassed, "I'm sorry my Lord, I'm being stonewalled at every turn and even the press doesn't want to know. Proving that he was not your parent's secret keeper doesn't help the fact that he killed Pettigrew for betraying them or the twelve muggles who died in the resulting blast. The whole of magical Britain has painted Sirius Black as the most evil man left in the country after the defeat of Voldemort and I can't get any backing to change that."

Emma couldn't keep quiet any longer, "The fact that he's innocent of one crime he was never charged with should reopen the whole case and permit him the trial he should have had in the first place. Your legal system, press and don't even mention that nuthouse you call a school would all be torn down and rebuilt in our world, is it any wonder we left the country?"

Griphook tried to get the meeting back on track, "I fear Hogwarts is in for worse times as McGonagall has resigned with Snape being promoted to Depute Headmaster." Both former Gryffindors shared a glance that said quite clearly they were glad to be out of there.

The goblin had used the slight pause to produce a basin covered with runes, "Perhaps this will help solve the problem, Lord Potter I need you to think of the encounter with Quirrell/Voldemort. Bring the memory to the front of your mind and Madam Bones can make a copy that can be viewed in the pensieve."

Harry did as he was instructed as Madam Bones teased a silver thread from his forehead and placed it in the bowl, a few taps with her wand and the whole scene played out in 3D above the bowl.

Dan had his arm around a crying Emma before the end while silently thanking every deity he could think of that there weren't enough potions for Hermione to continue through that wall of flame with Harry, otherwise she would have been right there with him and no child should ever have to face that. Even after surviving the death of that creature Harry was just dumped straight from hospital back into classes then shipped off to his abusive relatives, no support system in place, no counselling for the trauma he'd undergone just 'thanks but we need to hush this up' then detention for fighting and a dressing down in front of his fellow housemates.

How this boy turned out the way he did is a miracle and absolutely no thanks to the bastards who were supposedly looking out for his welfare, if Harry was going to be part of their lives from now on then he swore to be the father figure the boy had never known, Dan Granger had found his son.

Hermione had her head buried in Harry's chest by the time it had finished, it was too painful to watch what the boy with his arms currently around her had to endure, and those screams at the end were the stuff of nightmares.

Madam Bones brought everyone's focus back to the present, "Lord Potter can I say this is the first time I've ever known something to be bigger than the rumours surrounding the deed. You and Miss Granger should be nominated for bravery awards but then that would make a powerful old man look stupid when a couple of first years breached defences supposedly designed to stop a dark lord. Without your efforts we could have been facing a war that we're not prepared for, Susan will not be returning to Hogwarts in September and I will be talking to other parents I trust as well. I promise to visit Azkaban and speak to Sirius to see what I can do for him."

"Thank you Madam Bones and could you please tell him I'm doing my best to get him a trial."

She placed the memory in a glass vial before marking it with evidence tape as Griphook got to the real reason for her presence, "Madam Bones we would like you to preside over a betrothal ceremony between Lord Potter and Miss Granger."

Amelia would swear she actually heard the noise made by thousands of witch's dreams being shattered, including her own niece and her best friend who'd even promised each other they would share.

She looked at the boy and asked what she knew was a stupid question, "Lord Potter do you undertake this venture of your own free will?"

"I do."

She then looked towards the girl and asked the really stupid question, "Miss Granger do you undertake this venture of your own free will?"

"Of course I do."

She then turned her attention to the parents, "It's almost unheard of for muggle parents to allow their child's participation in a betrothal contract, has everything been explained to you?"

Emma was getting bad vibes from this woman and didn't appreciate the quip about 'Susan', the way her name was emphasised meant that Emma wouldn't be in the least surprised on discovering that one of the betrothal contracts in Harry's file was made out in the identity of Susan Bones. "Yes everything has been explained to our satisfaction."

Amelia tried again, "I'm not sure that you understand the relevance here, your daughter may find herself receiving unwanted attention that she won't have the training to deal with not to mention he-who-must-not-be-named and his followers."

Emma had just about enough of this bitch; no-one was getting away with belittling her daughter. "That Madam Bones is why we don't live in Britain, I'm afraid none of us have any confidence in the ability of the ministry to provide justice or protection for their citizens. As to the training aspect the difference between my daughter and the other nine betrothal contract offers Lord Potter has received is that Harry loves Hermione, how many others with the proper training would have followed him down there to face Voldemort when the head of the country's police force can't even say his bloody name!"

Griphook was beginning to regret his choice, not realising how much the woman wanted this betrothal for her niece until Emma Granger, like a lioness protecting her cubs mauled one of the most powerful women in the magical world.

It was a thoroughly chastised Amelia that just glanced over the documents; she would be going through them very carefully later. "Do you have rings?"

Harry and Hermione stood before her each holding the ring they were going to place on the other's finger.

"This is a very simple ceremony, as the Betrothal ring is placed on your finger the phrase 'I will have no other while I wear this ring' must

be spoken. This constitutes a magically binding contract so I must warn you not to proceed with this lightly."

Harry and Hermione were lost in each others eyes as the rest of the world ceased to exist, the rings were platinum with a knot design and a golden Griffin on either side of the knot. As Harry placed the ring on Hermione's finger she said, "I will have no other."

As Harry was having his ring placed on his finger he repeated Hermione's phrase, "I will have no other."

Golden ribbons of light appeared wrapping around both of them before shrinking to concentrate on their joined hands forming knots, uniting the couple for eternity as they sealed their destiny with a kiss. The lone betrothal ring on Hermione's finger was joined by the matching engagement ring and wedding band while Harry now sported a wedding band and his head of house ring.

Amelia was stunned into silence at what she'd just witnessed but Griphook went down on one knee, "Lord and Lady Potter, may I be the first to congratulate you and offer my sincere thanks for allowing me to witness such a rare and beautiful sight,"

Emma was just thinking that the betrothal ceremony was beautiful and looking forward to seeing an actual magical wedding when Griphook's words cut through that like a scalpel, Lord and LADY?

Madam Bones followed Griphook's lead, "Lord and Lady Potter let me apologise for my earlier comments, I had no idea you were bonding and sincerely wish you every happiness together. Susan and a few thousand other witches are going to be heartbroken when this news breaks, and it will break because the completion of the bond will have been recorded at the ministry with no chance of it being kept quiet."

Griphook took pity on the bemused parents and explained what had just happened, "Due to the commitment expressed when they recited their vows the bond completed and in the eyes of the magical world they are now married."

Emma noticed both Harry and Hermione were almost in tears waiting on their reaction to what had just happened, she refused to spoil her daughter's special day and threw her arms around both of them. "Congratulations you two, I've never seen a couple so made for each other."

Harry felt Dan's hand on his shoulder, "Welcome to the family son, now do I get to kiss the bride?"

Some couples claim their relationship is magical but both Granger parents had just witnessed the beautiful sight of their daughter magically bond with a young wizard and really had no option but to accept and support this in the same way they accepted and supported the fact she was a witch. They would sit down as a family and calmly discuss what these changes meant; the first change was that there would now be four of them involved in the family discussion.

There was very little business done after that so arrangements were made to return tomorrow with the hope of arranging tutors as the Potters and Grangers headed home.

-oOoOo-

Albus was actually looking forward to his breakfast this morning as his new defence professor announced his appointment at a book signing in Diagon Alley yesterday, the headmaster was hoping for the front page and some peace so he could personally lead the search for Potter. The pumpkin juice he was drinking ended up splattered over the headline that effectively just cast an Avada Kedavra on all his plans and left the old wizard looking distinctly green. In his century and a half of life he had learned quite a few curse words and used every one of them, even those in Mermish as he attempted to understand what he was reading.

Boy-Who-Lived Married To Best Friend

Screamed the front page headline that was causing reactions like his at breakfast tables up and down the country, the picture featured Harry and Hermione in their Gryffindor robes with Hedwig on his shoulder. One arm was around the girl but his other just hung at his

side as Ron had moved away from them and been cut out the picture. How the hell was this possible as the last reported sighting of the Grangers was in Southern Italy, looking at a magical institute.

Albus lost his appetite when he read that Lord and Lady Potter would not be returning to Hogwarts in September as both had nearly lost their lives in the castle due to the headmaster employing a professor possessed by the spirit of he-who-must-not-be-named to teach the children defence against the dark arts. This is being investigated by the DMLE whose departmental head Madam Bones acquired a pensieve memory of Lord Potter once more defeating the dark lord at great personal injury to himself.

Madam Bones had the honour of being present when Lord Potter's betrothal ceremony turned into a full bonding with his wife Lady Hermione Potter, unfortunately Madam Bones also reported that the Potters no longer live in Britain citing schooling and the lack of trial for his godfather as reasons for quitting the country.

Albus had not only lost his appetite but was in real danger of losing what little there was in his stomach, the paper went on to remark that Hermione broke all academic records for a first year student and then regurgitated any known fact about Harry for the next five pages.

The small article proclaiming the latest Hogwarts defence professor was buried deep inside the paper and concentrated more on the fight that broke out between Arthur Weasley and Lucius Malfoy than it did on Lockhart, it seemed Albus just couldn't catch a break.

He sat with his head in his hands trying to prepare himself mentally for the deluge of howlers he knew would soon be heading his way.

-oOoOo-

A distraught young red headed girl sat alone in her tiny bedroom trying to figure out why her world had just been smashed into tiny pieces. The headline in the Prophet would be the main topic of conversation at every magical household the length and breadth of Britain but more so in the Weasley household, while the arguments

and accusations had been flying back and forth across the table she had left unnoticed to go to her room.

Her one true love's jumper was under her pillow, wrapped in her nightgown but she didn't think she was ready yet to speak to the boy who had betrayed her with another girl.

Instead she took out an old black diary and began writing in the pages, her new best friend Tom would know what to do. He would never ignore her or break her heart by running off and marrying someone else after spending his nights with her and making promises he apparently never had any intention of keeping.

All her life she'd been overlooked or ignored, promised a new dress only to find out it was second hand well she'd had enough. There was only one person who had her best interests at heart and from now on the only person Ginny Weasley would be listening to was her friend Tom Riddle.

-oOoOo-

The owl from Gringotts offering her an employment interview had intrigued Minerva McGonagall, she assumed her friend Filius had used his contacts there to intervene on her behalf. She was flattered but just couldn't see herself working in a bank.

She was shown into a very opulent office where the goblin was unusually polite with his questions but appeared to be fixated on the state of her current relationship with her former boss.

Minerva was getting quite annoyed with this line of questioning when the goblin changed track, "Please excuse me Professor but the people I represent need to be certain that the whole scenario of you walking away from Hogwarts is not some grand scheme of a rather manipulative old wizard. I believe I was there at the precise moment you realised that you could no longer work for the wizard in question which was why I recommended you for this post, the decision to employ you though is unfortunately not mine to make."

Her Scottish brogue grew more noticeable in her voice, which was a sure sign to anyone who knew her that she was rapidly losing patience with the situation. "Why am I here then instead of meeting with the people who can make the decision?"

The Potters appeared out from under their invisibility cloak, "You are Professor, how would you like to work for us?"

-oOoOo-

Sirius Black didn't look it but he felt better than he had in over a decade, his visit from Madam Bones was the first conversation he'd had with someone from the ministry since waking up in this cell all those years ago. That wasn't the main reason for his euphoria though, it was the newspaper she'd left him that had the emaciated wizard actually chuckling with laughter.

His godson was married just before his twelfth Birthday to the smartest witch of his age, it took his father until seventh year just to get Harry's mother to date him. Sirius was amazed at just how much Harry resembled James and though this looked an older photograph the connection between the two kids in the picture was plain for everyone to see.

Reading about his godson's exploits filled Sirius with such a sense of pride, youngest seeker in over a century, fought a mountain troll to protect the girl he was now married to and defeated the dark lord again! This combined with the news from Madam Bones that they knew he wasn't the Potter's secret keeper but Harry still couldn't get him a trial decided his course of action.

He'd told her that Peter had escaped and was alive but not that they were both illegal animagus and now he knew why he'd withheld that information, Sirius Black might not be able to escape from Azkaban but Padfoot would be giving it a right good go.

A/N thanks for reading

In this story there will be only one horcrux and no prizes on offer for guessing what it is.

Chapter 6

Harry was lying face down on the table wondering if his father-in-law was trying to kill him though nothing would ever match the butt-clenchingly painful 'family talk' that they had the other night on their return from London. It was so bad Harry was seriously considering jumping off the balcony to escape.

The elves had joined them as they knew more about magical bonds than the rest of the family put together, the trouble really kicked off when Sophie announced that because of their bond Harry and Hermione would have to sleep in the same bed. This resulted in a joint talk about sex, hormones and differences in their growing bodies by his in-laws while sitting next to his wife which, even in the world of Harry Potter was bizarre. If you could actually die of embarrassment then Voldemort would be saved a job.

Emma and Hermione entered after their aerobics session and he received a kiss from his wife before she headed for the shower, Emma picked up the lotion that Sophie prepared and began massaging it into his aching muscles.

Harry groaned in relief as Emma shook her head, "Harry I'm going to be having words with Dan, he's pushing you too hard and could end up doing damage."

"Mum I need to push; Voldemort and his supporters won't take it easy on me just because I'm not ready. My body's used to punishment as I had ten years of it at the Dursleys; here I get a proper diet, a kiss from my wife and you to massage my aching muscles so I've never had it so good. We're trying to get our fitness levels up before classes actually start; all we've got on today is spending time with Minerva."

"She tells me you're taking lessons in etiquette and decorum, what brought that on?"

"My wife is a lady and I intend to treat her like one, my earlier life consisted of being fed on scraps and if I wasn't quick enough they went in the bin so knowing the proper fork to use was never high up on my agenda. I was sure they used to do it on purpose to see if they

could break me, and in my hungrier moments that bin could look pretty inviting but that would mean letting them win and I could never do that.”

Emma’s fingers dug too deep for a second causing the boy to wince as she was imagining the Dursley’s necks in her hands. She calmed herself down by remembering why she’d learned this skill in the first place as Dan picked up injury after injury from his beloved rugby, he enjoyed his gym but it didn’t replace the tension released by spending an afternoon legally hitting people. She was enjoying her morning aerobics sessions with Hermione, their daughter had never been the athletic type but was at least listening to them as she started off gently and built herself towards using the gym for the first time in her life.

Harry could actually feel through her fingers what his new mother was thinking; both Grangers had insisted he stop the Mr and Mrs crap now that he was family. Using ‘Dan’ seemed the best fit at the moment for him and his father-in-law but Emma had immediately insisted he call her mum and Harry couldn’t help but love her for it.

“Mum its ok, I plan on accidentally running into the Dursleys one day and introducing the beautiful Lady Potter to them, Petunia will be sick at the thought of missing out on introducing Hermione to her friends.” ‘And this is my niece the Lady Potter’ he said in a credible imitation of Petunia’s most pretentious tone. “Vernon might actually lose some weight since Griphook blocked the company issuing him a reference so he could just end up stacking shelves in Tesco’s. In my time at the Dursleys I learned a few things about how they tick and this will be punishing them for years to come.”

Emma could feel his muscles beginning to relax, thanks to her ministrations and his pleasant thoughts of revenge on his repulsive relatives, “I was pleased Minerva accepted your offer to stay here, I never realised that not only had she given up her job but her home as well.”

“Minerva is a great teacher and has so much more to offer other than the transfiguration she’s brilliant at, we’re learning about magical law, etiquette and deportment in different situations this morning then

we're taking her to the Empire State building to spend the afternoon as a muggle. We could swing by the new practice and pick you guys up when you finish?"

Emma was chuckling at the thought of Minerva the muggle and was about to make a suggestion when realisation hit, "I was about to suggest we could meet and go out to dinner but where are we going to get food as good as Sophie's or a view to match the one we currently enjoy."

Harry replied cheekily, "Well mum I'm just delighted that you like my humble abode here."

This earned Harry a smack to his shorts-clad ass as Emma chuckled, "Well I'll say this for you Lord Potter as hideaways go this one's not too shabby."

-oOoOo-

It was a sombre group who silently sat dressed in black in a large room at Gringotts, Hermione clutching Harry's hand with the Grangers positioned just to their left.

There was another couple present with a pink haired daughter who appeared a few years older than Harry and Hermione though it was the shabbily dressed man in the corner who caught his eye.

Before Harry could say anything the Malfoys made their grand entrance with Amelia Bones trailing in their wake, Harry was delighted when the Malfoys had objected to Dumbledore being present and he'd objected to Fudge because as far as Harry was concerned the minister had an innocent man's blood on his hands so Madam Bones was representing the ministry.

Sirius Black had been killed while attempting to escape from Azkaban and magical Britain was of the opinion that this just proved his guilt; forget that he never had a trial they would sleep better in their beds knowing that the murdering death eater was finally deceased.

Nobody questioned why the extra guards and dementors were suddenly posted to his wing, or why said extra guards were unable to stop the dementors they were supposed to be in control of when Sirius mysteriously found his way out of his cell. As far as the Potters were concerned the whole thing stank worse than a barrel of fish heads on a sunny day.

There were people who didn't want questions asked far less have them answered so the Sirius Black case was well and truly closed and his will reading today would mark the final chapter in his story.

Harry wasn't able to grieve for a man he'd never met and only found out existed a short while ago but was seething with anger at being denied the opportunity to meet the wizard who should have raised him from a toddler except for the incompetence and deliberate manipulations of the ministry of magic.

It became clear why there were so many goblin guards present as Director Ragnok entered the room and occupied the head of the table position, the Black account must be substantial to require the goblin leader's personal attention.

Griphook was at his side before standing up and beginning to read, "I will now read the last Will and Testament of Sirius Orion Black."

'Anyone present who knows me probably can't believe I'm being so responsible but today I held my godson in my arms and swore I would do right by him. James and Lily have given me the greatest honour ever bestowed in naming me Harry's godfather and I already love the little guy like he was my own. Therefore I have no hesitation in bequeathing all land, titles, property and vaults that I possess to Harry James Potter. My only proviso is if I die from exhaustion on honeymoon before changing my will then I want you to look after my new wife kiddo, she's going to be devastated at losing such a handsome man and wonderful lover. We've all got to go sometime and this would be my preferred method.'

The silence when Griphook finished speaking only lasted a few seconds before Malfoy senior exploded, "How can the Black title, lands and gold go to this half-blood mongrel, the Blacks were great

believers in pure blood supremacy so my son should have inherited by blood. I demand the will be changed to prevent the dishonour of Potter and his filthy mudblood whore inheriting...”

Dan Granger didn't know what a 'mudblood' was but he was well aware of the words this arsehole had bracketed it with and to use them in reference to his daughter was going to cost him. Since Kings Cross station Dan had felt as if his little princess was slipping away from him and he couldn't even get angry at Harry who treated Hermione like the lady she apparently now was, but this blond prick was going to experience a lot of pent-up Granger aggression that no amount of gym work seemed to shift.

For the second time in as many weeks Lucius Malfoy's face suffered because his mouth insulted someone's daughter only this wasn't middle-aged with paunch Arthur Weasley behind the punch, this was a very fit and well built Dan Granger who knew how to throw a punch.

Malfoy was on the deck with a broken jaw before he even realised Dan had moved but he soon found out the muggle wasn't finished as he sprang on him and continued to pummel his now less than aristocratic features.

Draco was drawing his wand to aid his father when Harry reached across, grabbed him by his blond locks and smashed his face down into the table while his mother now had a reason for her nose being up in the air. There was a Vinewood wand directly under it being held as steady as a rock by Lady Potter; Mrs Malfoy showed a lot more control than the male members of her family by remaining completely still.

The goblins could hardly contain their glee at the pureblood wizards getting their arses kicked but eventually they helped Dan off the pulverised Malfoy though one of them rather clumsily managed to stand on the blond wizard's cane and snapped his wand. Poor Lucius really had no idea how to deal with a punch to the face, as if getting hit by Arthur Weasley wasn't bad enough he'd now been beat-up by a muggle and totally lost the plot.

“We will keep you alive only long enough to watch you’re wife and daughter being raped to death.”

It took every goblin present to restrain Dan and Harry but they had forgot about Emma, she took two steps before lashing out with all her might and her instep connected perfectly with Malfoy’s groin. He wouldn’t be raping anyone for a long time while the unmistakable noise generated from the impact brought every male in the room up short, Harry approached Ragnok and bowed.

“Director Ragnok I apologise for you having to witness that but I will not apologise for the reaction of my family, too many of these purebloods think they can say whatever they like with impunity well not where my family’s involved. Anyone using words like that in connection with my family are going to find the wrath of house Potter visited upon them.”

Hermione lowered her wand but kept it in her hand while allowing Mrs Malfoy to tend to her dazed and bloodied son, nobody bothered with her bleeding husband as he lay groaning on the floor.

Lucius Malfoy was in a terrible rage, it was bad enough loosing to a blood traitor but now he had been painfully and publically thrashed by a muggle and his wife, he should have been ruling the country by now instead of lying bleeding on the goblin’s floor while holding his crushed nuts. Pain, rage and a kick in the stones are not good companions of clear thought and careful planning so when his anger sought and found a target Lucius locked on.

Harry Potter had ruined his dreams of serving at his master’s side and cost him a fortune in bribes when he defeated the Dark Lord as a baby, now the news was that he had repeated the feat at Hogwarts before the holidays. Lucius was taking a massive gamble with his plan and couldn’t afford any slip-ups so Harry Potter was going to have to die.

As carefully as he possibly could the death eater slid the blade from the special concealed holster in his boot and lunged at the brat while he was distracted talking to the goblin.

Hermione had been watching Malfoy senior because if he was in any way similar to his son then he would make a try at revenge, when she saw him attempt to attack Harry the young witch fired the tripping hex at him.

Lucius landed short of his target but the dagger had cut his hand when he fell, it was barely more than a scratch except the horror reflected on his face told a different story altogether. Seconds later he was screaming in agony though it was thankfully short lived as the poison was rapidly coursing through his body and stopped all brain functions less than a minute later, he was a dead man the second that poison entered his body.

The whole room had watched the tableau play out in front of them as Harry held a crying Hermione in his arms, "It was only a tripping jinx!" she kept repeating.

Amelia spoke in her official capacity as head of the DMLE, "Lord Potter, I had the privilege of speaking with your godfather and he was immensely proud of you, he had the newspaper that featured your bonding on his person when he died. There is not one shred of doubt in my mind that he had no intentions of changing his will. As to the matter of Mr Malfoy the whole room heard Lady Potter cast the tripping hex as a defensive measure to protect her husband and only a poisoned blade could have caused that reaction. Had he even scratched either of you with that dagger nothing could have prevented your death, there will be no charges resulting from these actions."

Director Ragnok decided it was time he took part in these proceedings; he should be able to get one over on the purebloods as well. "Madam Bones I hate to disagree but we must allow the law to run its course here, Mr Malfoy attempted to murder a head of two noble and ancient families, a deed which his family stood to benefit greatly from. There can be no doubt of the attempt nor what the law states on the matter."

Emma watched from Dan's arms as the body was removed and the dagger retained by the goblins as evidence to be produced at a trial if necessary. Part of her was thinking that no one should have to die

like that but by far her greatest emotion wanted her to go over and have one last kick at the bastard who'd threatened her and Hermione with rape before trying to murder her children. Who were these animals who could do that to a child? She now understood Harry's drive as that man's eyes had been filled with hatred towards her son-in-law before his wife had saved his life again, no wonder they were so close having killed to protect each other before they even made it to their teens. She had a feeling that Harry was about to have even more responsibility thrust upon him.

"Everything that the Malfoy family had, including all family members now belongs to Lord Potter-Black," announced Ragnok.

Both remaining Malfoy's were deathly pale at that news but the Potters decided to let them stew for a few minutes. Harry was trying to work out what Ragnok's words would mean to them when his eye was caught with a most unusual sight, the girl with the pink hair was now the proud owner of green hair though it was rapidly turning purple.

"Could somebody please handle the introductions here?" Harry asked.

Amelia gave a sheepish grin, "Sorry my Lord, this is my fault. When I spoke to Sirius the only people other than yourself he asked after were his cousin Andromeda and one of his best friends Remus Lupin. I asked them here today to meet you and hear about Sirius."

Through their bond both Harry and Hermione were developing a keen sense of when someone was lying or trying to manipulate them and their bullshit detector was going off in their heads at deafening volume. Their best guess at the moment was Madam Bones trying to create some ties to good old Blighty for them because currently they could care less if they never set foot in the country again.

"My Lord I'm Andromeda Tonks, this is my husband Ted and our daughter Nymphadora, she's a metamorphmagus and loses a bit of control when excited. Sirius was my favourite cousin because neither of us believed the pureblood bullshit that our family supported; I was cast out of the Black family for marrying Ted instead of who they chose for me, the fact that he's a muggle born means I've had no

contact with my family for nearly twenty years. Cissi here is my sister yet hasn't even acknowledged me though we're currently only sitting a few seats apart."

"Mrs Tonks I have nothing but admiration for a woman with the courage to follow her convictions, I also happen to think that muggle borns make the best spouses." Harry joked as he kissed his still trembling wife. "My first action as new head of the Black family will be to bring you and your family back into the fold."

Harry's attention turned to the shabbily dressed individual who'd been introduced as Remus, "Hi Harry, you won't remember me as you were little more than a toddler the last time we met but I was good friends with both your parents and Sirius."

Harry's eyes were boring into the man, "Why?" was all he said.

A confused Remus answered, "Sorry Harry, I don't know what you're asking?"

Harry's voice was devoid of emotion as he answered, "Why if you were such good friends with them didn't I hear from you until now? Why am I hearing from you now?"

"It was thought best I have no contact with you..."

Harry cut him off, "Who thought it best? You - My parents - My godfather?"

Remus then said the one name guaranteed to set Harry off, "Dumbledore said..."

"What the bloody hell was Dumbledore sticking his crooked nose into my business for and why were you letting him? I was eleven before I discovered my parents weren't a couple of no account drunks that died in a car crash, does that sound like your 'good friends' to you? Sirius had a valid excuse for not being part of my life so don't you dare hit me with this 'Dumbledore said' shit."

Remus didn't know what to say, his world had ended that night as well and even though Albus had worded his suggestion carefully there was no doubt an order had just been issued. "I'm sorry Harry but I'm a werewolf and figured that I wouldn't be welcome."

"Were my parents aware of your condition?"

"Of course they were."

"And did it make any difference to them?"

"No."

"Then why did you assume it would make a difference to their son? Its been nice meeting you Mr Lupin but I intend to spend the rest of my life looking forward not back as there's nothing left there for me anymore."

Harry shook the wizards hand before Remus left; he silently promised himself he would get Griphook to assist with finding the man a job while they kept an eye on him. He would get to know Remus Lupin on his own terms and in his own time, not as some ministry sponsored experiment. Now all they had left to deal with was the Malfoys.

"Director Ragnok what are my choices regarding the Malfoys?"

"The moment you sign the paperwork to become Lord Potter-Black their lives become yours to do with as you wish, making an attempt on a Lords life for profit is punishable by death to the perpetrator and their family, this is the oldest law in our land and the name Malfoy will cease to exist."

Harry's gaze locked on the terrified blond Slytherin, "Draco unlike your father or his former master I do not kill children for power or profit but I would end both your lives in a heartbeat to protect my family." His tone of voice more than convinced the remaining Malfoys he was deadly serious. "Ok does anybody have any options for me that doesn't result in these two having to die?"

It was surprisingly Andromeda who made a suggestion, "My Lord as head of the Black family you have the power to dissolve Cissi's marriage making her once more a Black, Draco could be formally adopted into the family but in any case would no longer be a Malfoy. They could stay with us until we get something sorted out."

Narcissi Malfoy had expected to die from the moment her stupid husband had made that ludicrous attack, the arrogant bastard had all the subtlety of a troll when his pride was involved. She would have tried to intervene and prevent this catastrophe but the wand in her face had meant business so she could only watch the train wreck occur. It was a total shock to hear her sister speak on their behalf and maybe they would get to see tomorrow after all. She spoke for the first time that day, "You would do that for us Andi?"

Andromeda spoke as if trying to explain something to a child, "Cissi you are my sister in blood, my family and no decree can change that. You and Bella bought into the bullshit and look what it got you both, our sister is a crazed psycho in Azkaban while we sit here bargaining for you and your child's lives. What happened to those three Black sisters who did everything together?"

Harry was liking this woman more and more as her values seemed to mirror his own, "Ok Mrs Tonks how do we go about this?"

"Well for a start my Lord you can call me Andi, it's all very simple once you become head of the Black family but I would recommend having them take loyalty oaths"

Cissi was on her feet, "I will gladly swear loyalty to the Black Family and its head for me and my son."

"There will be no oaths taken here today and Draco will perform his own oath, if I'm old enough to receive it then he's of age to make one. Listen carefully Draco because the games have stopped and this is now life or death, you go and stay with your aunt for a week and give your future careful consideration. Your father made choices that will see the name Malfoy struck from the records and placed both your lives in my hands, I'm hoping you're going to make better choices."

Draco's first instinct was to scream abuse at Potter but that was his father talking, his invincible father who was dragged out the room like a piece of poisoned meat. He wanted to swear vengeance rather than allegiance but even he could see it was his father's own fault, beaten-up by muggles then killed by a tripping jinx. He'd repeatedly told Draco that he was a disgrace to the Malfoy name because Potter bested him well who was the disgrace now? Draco just nodded agreement to Potter as he didn't trust his mouth not to run away with him and they'd seen the results of that once already today.

With that settled Harry signed the papers, welcomed Andi back into the Black family and dissolved the Malfoy marriage, he thought he was finished for the day when a loud pop announced otherwise.

"Master Harry Potter sir is an even greater wizard than Dobby thought, to defeat former master and take Dobby into your service is Dobby's greatest wish."

The little elf was sobbing as he clung to Harry's left leg before remembering why he was there, "Master Harry and Mistress Mione must not return to Hogwarts, former master is releasing great evil there by really dark magic. People will die but not Harry Potter and his Mione."

"We're not going back to Hogwarts Dobby but can you tell us anymore about this threat?"

The little elf was back to clinging to Harry's leg and sobbing with relief; Harry's eyes asked a question of Narcissi Black.

"I'm sorry my Lord, my former husband used to hatch plots almost weekly to return his beloved dark lord. I'm afraid I stopped listening years ago."

All eyes moved towards Draco and the boy felt this was his first test, should he tell them what little he knew? "Father said something was going to be opened that would result in the purging of Hogwarts of all those not fit to attend, he said last time it was open a student died. That's all I know, he told me to keep my head down and enjoy the show."

Both Potters looked to Amelia to find out what the ministry position on this matter would be.

“The Cannons will win the league before the ministry would shut Hogwarts on the word of a house elf, even if they tried Dumbledore would block them at every turn. We would need more information before we could take any action.”

Dobby let go of Harry’s leg and ran head-first into the wall, he was about to repeat the experience when Harry grabbed him, “What are you doing?”

“Dobby is punishing himself for not getting enough information, Dobby has to always punish himself when he’s been bad or Malfoy’s tell me to.”

Hermione had fixed the blond pair with a look that could kill while Harry spoke to the misguided little elf, “Dobby you’re in our family now and I order you never to punish yourself again, do not take orders from anyone but Hermione or I and if you think you’ve done something wrong speak to us about it.”

The little elf was crying tears of happiness again as Hermione had an idea, “Madam Bones if we gave your department permission to search the former Malfoy mansion for information on this plot would you supervise it? Griphook could go as well to recover any goblin items there and Dobby would identify any hidden rooms or compartments for you both.”

Amelia was stunned, getting into Malfoy mansion was almost as difficult as breaking into Gringotts yet her she was being offered carte blanche access with Elvin assistance and goblin back-up, “My Lady I can have a trusted team ready by nine am tomorrow.”

A now smiling Dobby popped away to make the house ready.

Harry spoke to Griphook, “We need to have another plan, you know Dumbledore is going to spout his ‘Hogwarts safest place in Britain’ rubbish so we hit first.”

“What are you suggesting my Lord?”

“Let’s research this threat, if a student died surely there must be records of that? We need to find out how it happened and if it could be stopped from being repeated, I’ve suddenly come in to quite a bit of gold and would happily spend it allowing students to attend other schools that are safe. Run stories in the Prophet about the threat and promise financial aid with the extra costs involved if parents wish to send their children overseas to be taught.”

Amelia sounded a note of caution, “My Lord the minister might see that as a direct attack on his authority, laws have been changed for less.”

“Griphook could we use that pensive of yours again, my wife and I have a few memories we would like to share.”

A quick word with Hermione and Amelia removed two silver threads from each of them; everyone then watched Harry’s first encounter with Hogwarts new Depute Headmaster, Hermione’s adventure with the toilet troll as well as Harry’s jinxed broom from her prospective. They finally watched Harry’s encounter with Voldemort in the forbidden forest before he spoke, “We left out the encounter with Voldemort at the end of the year as most people in here have already seen it, what do you think the effect would be if we walked into the Prophet offices and provided them with the complete set?”

Had Dan Granger seen those before he met Dumbledore it would have required more than goblins to pull him off the old bastard. He was all in favour of marching straight over to this newspaper and blasting the old coot right out the water. It was one thing to hear your daughter say there was an incident with a troll but another to watch it, the bloody thing was enormous and had swung Harry about like a dish rag.

Ragnok had seen Griphook’s memory of viewing the other conflict but these memories were much more impressive, there level of commitment to one another left no doubt in his mind that they would form a full soul bond with the political, financial and magical power

behind them to become a force to be reckoned with. Ragnok knew a war was coming and his people looked to him for guidance in leading their nation to safety and prosperity, Voldemort wasn't even a consideration, Dumbledore wasn't much better and the ministry couldn't help itself far less the goblin nation. Ragnok saw in these two the beginnings of another option, if they got time to grow and train then that's who the goblins would be throwing their support behind so they would just have to make sure they got that time.

Amelia could hazard a guess at the outcome of everything she'd seen becoming public knowledge, an angry mob storming the ministry while Snape and Dumbledore would be the first to lose their jobs she'd bet her auror's badge they wouldn't be the last.

Tonks had been quiet all day but there was just no way that was going to last, "Cor you two, we had heard stories but bloody hell that was something else. I saw the broom thing but it was all hushed up, same with the troll, we all know Snape's a bastard but why were you in the forbidden forest at night?"

Harry was struggling not to laugh at some of the expressions the girl's face was morphing into, "We were sent there for a detention." He saw Andi and Ted Tonks exchange glances so dived right in. "Mr and Mrs Tonks, when you rejoined our family I became responsible for your safety, I could not see Nymphadora sent to Hogwarts as I don't consider it safe."

"But I've just sat my OWL's and need NEWT's to become an auror and please call me Tonks, some parents should be shot for inflicting such punishment on their children."

"Well Miss Tonks we are currently arranging private tutors at a secure location and as family we would be delighted if you would join us, just tell us what NEWT's you want to take and it would help us too having somebody older to duel against."

"Wow! How good would duelling Harry Potter look on my application to the auror department?"

Amelia Bones actually smiled, "Miss Tonks having seen images of Lord Potter in action I can say it could only help with your chosen profession."

Harry could see himself getting his arse whipped for a while but a steep learning curve was exactly what he was after and he would need to win against somebody four year older before he was ready to take on the adults. This girl also looked like a lot of fun and it would be important that he and Hermione took time out to live and not bury themselves in work. She was also now family and that gave Harry a nice warm feeling in the pit of his stomach, the Malfoy's fates were pretty much in their own hands and he could only hope they would make the right decisions.

"Madam Bones please take those copies of our memories to assure the minister that our fears are genuine and any stories in the Prophet or elsewhere are not personal. As I stated earlier I will not stand by and watch my family being attacked so, should the issue become personal against my family then retaliation will be swift."

Amelia nodded though with Malfoy gone and Lord Potter now in possession of all his financial records she had a feeling Fudge wouldn't be creating any waves, Dumbledore though would be an entirely different matter.

-oOoOo-

Ginny noticed her hand was bleeding, and then she noticed the knife in her other hand. She was behind the shed her dad kept all his muggle stuff in, it was the middle of the night and she had no idea how she got here.

The real shock came when she realised what she'd been doing there, her Harry's jumper was cut to shreds. The now sobbing girl was making her way back to her bedroom while trying to understand what had happened, her only thought was that she had been sleepwalking and been woken when she accidentally cut her hand.

Ginny was heartbroken at the destruction of her prized possession because she would have forgiven him soon and he could cuddle up to her once more but that was no longer possible.

She had the biggest piece that was left wrapped around her hand to stop her cut bleeding as she lit a candle and reached for her quill and ink, Tom would tell her what to do.

A/N thanks for reading.

Sirius was the first to lose his life in the new war but won't be the last.

War does not determine who is right - only who is left.
Bertrand Russell

Chapter 7

It was an ashen faced Cornelius Fudge that left Amelia Bones's office with the knowledge that a young wizard had his career and even liberty in his hands, after watching those memories and hearing that Lord Potter –Black had also absorbed the Malfoy monies and lands the Minister had no problem granting the small request he asked.

Amelia watched as the Minister of Magic scurried out her office and idly wondered if he would scoot straight to Dumbledore for help now that his other confessor was no longer available, he might find Dumbledore had problems of his own.

It really irked Amelia that such a small minded, weak willed person managed to plot his way to the top but she didn't think he would be there for much longer as one of his support pillars was dead and the other politically damaged. She was as honest as the day was long and could admit to herself she wanted his job, not to line her own vaults or as a power trip but just to see the position filled the way she envisioned it should be.

Magical Britain was being left behind the rest of the world because a small minority were determined to keep the status quo where they ruled supreme, Fudge wasn't a leader but more of a figure head that was wheeled out to wave to the crowds and take the fall when things went pear shaped.

Amelia was sure the next minister would need the backing of Lord Potter-Black, that and the fact her niece was crazy about him had led to her offering the betrothal contract. When that blew up in her face she tried to ingratiate herself to him by introducing the Tonks family and Remus Lupin but he saw right through her and dismissed Lupin out of hand. She had underestimated them and now they would be careful around her until figuring out what she was up to, Amelia hated playing these games but wasn't naive enough to think you could become minister without mastering them.

She then got a break when Lord Potter-Black asked her if she could do something for him and Amelia immediately said yes, if this was a test to see how trustworthy she was then she intended to pass with

flying colours. For the amount of political and financial power he held it was a very modest request but one that came from the heart and she would not fail him, not even a bug would get through the shields she was having very discreetly erected around the site.

-oOoOo-

Emma Granger had both arms tightly around her son-in-law as she had the ride of her life, her grip got even tighter as Harry took his birthday present from his wife into a power dive that had Emma screaming before he pulled up in the nick of time.

Since she was a little girl Emma had dreamed of riding on a broomstick but never had it been like this, no gentle glide above the rooftops but slaloming through trees at ludicrous speeds with gut-wrenching climbs and dives thrown in for good measure. Emma loved it and swore roller coasters were pedestrian compared to this, seat belts and harnesses were for wimps as she clung on tighter still and screamed loudly in Harry's ear.

A watching Dan was worried sick until Hermione giggled, "Dad, Harry's a natural at this. He normally has people firing large cannon balls at him while weaving in between hostile players, mum's perfectly safe though don't tell her that. I told Harry she was an adrenalin junkie as far as roller coasters were concerned and he's going to give her the full treatment."

This didn't help as the broom went into a tailspin and Emma's screams must have been heard for miles around but Harry again levelled off at the last second and flew over to where father and daughter were standing.

Hermione was trying not to laugh as her mother had to be helped off the broom, her hair looked even worse than her daughter's first thing in the morning and she could hardly stand on her rubbery legs but still managed to say "Brilliant!" at least once every five seconds.

Hermione climbed on as Harry took her on a gentle circuit around the grounds and buildings that were Potter Manor. They were here to relocate the library to New York and allow Harry some time on his

new Nimbus 2001, Hermione was well aware flying calmed her husband and for what he had planned for later she knew he needed this now. No words were spoken or needed as she held him close while he guided the broom gently over their property.

She would be strong for him and hope that was enough, this was unknown territory for both of them and she was so glad her parents were going to be there as Hermione had a feeling they were going to need them.

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Remus Lupin was having a strange time of it, first the news about Sirius being killed while escaping and then Amelia Bones claiming he was innocent with Pettigrew not only the secret keeper but still alive. Meeting Harry was like looking at a young James but then he had been dismissed out of hand, Remus couldn't really fault the lad as he should have demanded to be part of his life and would one day have to face his friends and explain why he wasn't.

Then he was stood in Madam Malkin's being fitted for new robes that were being paid for by someone who'd also set him up with an interview, the robes he was now wearing were black and more elegant than anything he'd ever owned. It was a different Remus Lupin who made his way back into Gringotts for his meeting and was presented with a portkey, which was how he came to be standing in front of one Harry Potter.

"Hello Mr Lupin, I'm sorry we got off on the wrong foot the last time but I needed to know just whose side you were on. My goblin friends tell me you're not on any side and are forced more and more into the muggle world to find work, there really is an interview for you but we have another task to accomplish first. I would also like to get to know you a bit better as the only information I have on my parents is that I look like my dad but have my mother's eyes, I'm hoping you can change that.

-oOoOo-

Nymphadora Tonks watched the scene with tears streaming down her face, she had managed to hold it together when they buried Sirius beside the Potters but when Harry started introducing his wife to the headstones engraved with his parents names her heart broke for the boy.

Here lay the three people who had wanted nothing more in the world than to watch him grow into the fine man he would become and he had no memory of them, Harry started to cry and dropped to his knees with his wife dropping down right beside him. Watching the memories of those two and their commitment to each other was a humbling experience for Tonks, they literally completed one another and Hermione was being his strength here.

Harry had arranged with Amelia for the body of Sirius Black to be released and buried next to his best friend, the location was heavily warded for their privacy and only those with an invite could enter. Her mother, Remus and Professor McGonagall had spoken some words about Sirius in lieu of a service because of the nine people present, four had never met him and Tonks and her dad had only seen him a couple of times many years ago.

It was when Harry approached the graves of his parents with flowers that the emotion of the occasion hit everyone like a bludger, he was explaining why his life was so much better now and he hoped they didn't mind that he was calling Emma mum when the dam burst and emotions that had been held back for years were released in a flood of tears.

Emma and her mum were now hugging them both while Dan, her dad and Remus stood back displaying body language that only men embarrassed by their own emotions can manage. Each secretly wanted nothing more than to hug the crying kids but they were too uncomfortable with public displays of affection to carry out their wish, she had no such barrier and quickly joined the group hug.

Harry could feel the love that was coming from his family and began to get his emotions back under control, his new family meeting his old one had proved just to much for him but the support system he had in place meant Harry could cope with things so much better now. He felt

his parents would understand that he couldn't remember them and would be happy that he had Emma and Dan in his life, they already felt more like parents to him than Vernon and Petunia ever did while the girl cuddling both him and Hermione was definitely more what Harry thought a cousin should be.

He was helped to his feet and put both arms around the girl to give her a hug, "Thanks Nym, I just knew we were going to get along."

Her hair was cycling through all the colours of the rainbow until a grinning Hermione hugged her as well, she didn't even mind him shortening her name because of the way he said it she could feel it came from the heart and Nym wasn't going to argue with that.

The nine of them took a portkey but a quartet of witches and wizards were shocked when they arrived at their destination, "Were in New York?" Tonks asked?

"Yes, this is where you'll be living and going to school, is that Ok with you?"

Harry got his answer when the girl with the multi-coloured hair picked him up, spun him round and kissed him.

The 'hem-hem' caused her to freeze and look into the chocolate brown eyes that were boring into her, "Could you please put my husband down!"

Nym was stuttering and stammering before Hermione's resolve cracked and she burst out laughing, "You should see your face," she made it a three way hug before speaking again, "Nym you're family now and Harry get's as many hugs as possible from his family, we've a lot of years to make up for."

She couldn't believe she'd just been duped, "Why you little minx! Oh I think I'm going to love it here."

Hermione took her by the arm to show their latest schoolmate her new room, Hermione's old one since she now stayed with Harry.

Dan, Emma and Minerva gave the Tonks parents the grand tour leaving Harry and Remus alone, "Mr Lupin, please have a seat."

"Thanks Harry but could you please call me Remus, Mr Lupin makes me feel old."

"Ok Remus so straight to business before they all return, Minerva has been teaching us about the wizarding world and I now realise there's so much that I don't know about and you are in a unique position to help with this problem. I am head of two families and have just adsorbed a third yet I know nothing about them, I don't just mean the facts like grandparents names but I want to learn as much as possible what these people were like. There is hundreds of year's worth of family history to sort through as well as things like how did my parents meet? Did my dad change my diaper or was he hopeless and my mum had to do it? I want to employ you to be the family historian, dig through the facts and figures to find out what the Blacks, Potters and Malfoys were really like, I don't want a sanitized version but warts and all – if it ties into wizarding history so much the better. I want to meet once a week where we can go over what you've found and decide where the research goes next while at the same time learning about my parents from someone who shared a dorm with my father and godfather for seven years and was the Gryffindor prefect with my mother."

Remus was blown away, here was an offer of work that was custom made for him and so much more challenging than security guard or working in a warehouse, which is what he'd been doing to earn a living.

It was obvious Remus was more than interested so Harry pressed home his advantage, "Griphook will provide a list of properties we own so please just choose one as your base and live there, you will have access to all the properties, vaults and anything that won't allow you to open it then bring it with you to our next meeting. Dobby will look after you and help with everything you need, the little guy is brilliant but just gets too emotional around me so I want him working with some people who'll treat him properly and hope he'll eventually calm down. Griphook is already moving us out of any inherited businesses that are dark and though the search of Malfoy manor

didn't throw up what we were looking for quite a number of dark objects were taken away to be destroyed. Any that your research uncovers should be passed to Griphook for disposal."

Remus found himself nodding, totally forgetting that he was dealing with a young wizard, that he'd yet to say yes or even that salary hadn't been mentioned. Interesting tasks with a place to live and a house elf to take care of him thrown in was more than he'd had at anytime since leaving Hogwarts, he was well and truly hooked though would get an even bigger shock the next time he visited his vault.

Their discussion ended abruptly when Tonks exploded into the room like a firecracker and was once again all over Harry, it took her mother entering for her to switch targets, "Mum, you just have to see this room, it's bigger than my old dorm with its own fantastic bathroom and even a computer!"

Ted was amusedly shaking his head as his hyper daughter dragged his wife away, "Harry I notice that you have kept this place mostly muggle, was that deliberate?"

"Yes sir, Hermione is muggle born with me being muggle raised so why should I give up Ninja Turtles and Transformers when all the magical world has to offer is gobstones and wizard chess."

This had everyone laughing but Minerva and Harry didn't fancy trying to explain 'robots in disguise' to someone who didn't have a clue what a robot is far less what its disguise was supposed to be.

The Tonks women returned just as the elves announced that dinner was served which was a delightful meal as hilarious stories of what Harry's father and godfather got up to at Hogwarts were told, Hermione had to thump her husband on the back as he nearly choked on hearing that they had made Snape's hair not only curly but bright pink.

After they had settled down and moved in from the terrace the Potters corralled the Tonks for a talk, "Andi I currently have three seats on the Wizengamot, the Potter, Black and former Malfoy seats and would like to pass the voting rights to you. I have no interest in politics

but it would be stupid to ignore what has landed in my lap if we can use it to drag Britain into the new millennium. The Wizengamot would object to anyone of mixed blood and you're the only pureblood in the family."

Andi took a moment to think before answering, "Harry I really appreciate the offer and also the trust it implies but I stepped away from all that pureblood nonsense years ago and have no wish to return to it. Cissi on the other hand loves all the wheeling and dealing and would be a much better choice than me, she's a Black now who will gladly swear a loyalty oath so you can absolutely trust her to follow instructions and do what's best for our family."

"Have you any idea what Draco's going to do?" Hermione asked.

"No, he's spent most of his time alone in his room. Cissi has been in and out trying to talk to him but his father was a big influence in his life and we still don't know what he's going to decide."

Harry had his arm around Hermione for reassurance, "His father was an evil git who died by his own hand, and I don't want to cast Draco out nameless and penniless but will do it if he can't accept being a Black. The first impression I had of Draco was of a spoilt brat who revelled being in his father's powerful shadow, well that's now gone and he has more options than his father was giving us, if he can't handle it then tough!"

-oOoOo-

Draco was sitting alone in a bedroom at his aunt's house with his face in danger of wearing a permanent scowl as that appeared to be his favourite expression lately. He was struggling with a decision that really was no decision at all, swear an oath and become Draco Black or refuse and be a nameless pauper.

All the values his father had extolled offered the proud pureblood no assistance whatsoever while he lay dying in agony from his own poisoned blade. Had he made contact with Potter the goblins would have cut his father to pieces within seconds with both himself and his mother quickly meeting the same fate, because they were married

Granger would inherit and wouldn't have lifted a finger to save them if her precious Potter was murdered.

On paper there was no choice to make but life wasn't lived on paper, Draco knew he would have to obey the loyalty oath or it would cost him his magic and perhaps even his life and there was his problem. Draco wasn't certain he could do it and the price of failure was very high.

His mother had been helping but he was going to have to forget everything his father ever taught him and start again from scratch with a halfblood and a mudblood as head of family. He'd received permission to write to his friends but to say he was disappointed with the answers would be a bit of an understatement, he was spitting tacks. Pansy had immediately used the fact that he was no longer Draco Malfoy to cancel their betrothal while Crabbe and Goyle just said 'sorry' he knew they were thick but expected more than a one word answer.

It was the reply from his godfather that frightened him most, putting it bluntly he was to say yes then spy on Potter and pass the information onto Severus. The fact that this could cost him his life from the magical oath was conveniently overlooked and Draco couldn't help but think that was something his father would have done, he'd been taught the dogma that Malfoy's bow to no one yet his father's greatest wish was to have his master back. These inconsistencies were peppered throughout his father's 'teachings' and his actions in the bank that day was hardly behaviour becoming of a Slytherin.

His mother had told him that the Blacks were a far more wealthy and powerful family than the Malfoys, they hadn't been in the Weasley class but neither were they in the same league as the Blacks or Potters and only the money his father had got for their betrothal had allowed them to prosper as they had.

He'd been going round in circles for days but it all came back to the same thing, could he give his oath and mean it? His scowl deepened with the thought of being poorer than a Weasley without even his pureblood status to give him comfort, with no family name he would lose that as well. He decided to go over things one last time in his

head to see if he could come up with another option though only one day remained of the deadline Potter had set, his mother was delighted she was going to be a Black again and leaning heavily on him to make the same decision.

Draco knew what needed to be done but just didn't know if he could live with the decision, Potter was right about one thing though, the games were now over and it really was life or death.

-oOoOo-

Albus had to concede to his guests from the press that the article in the Prophet was historically accurate, factually correct and the conclusions it drew could be devastating for the future of Hogwarts. The fabled chamber of secrets was reportedly opened before and a student had lost their life, he'd also been forced to admit they'd no idea what killed her or where it came from. His only defence against the accusation that, should the chamber be opened again the school would be defenceless was to state that Hogwarts was the safest building in Britain. His only comment on Lord Potter-Black's offer of financial aid to those who wished to attend school abroad was to thank him for his concern but reiterate there was no need for any students to look elsewhere for their magical education.

The reporters had barely closed his office door behind them when there was a cacophony of noise emanating from all the portraits of the former headmasters, Albus had to shout to restore some kind of order in the room but Phineas Nigellus Black was not for being quiet.

"Albus how could you? As headmaster of Hogwarts your first duty is always the safety of her students, you're handing out guarantees and you have no idea whether you can deliver on them."

"I never gave any guarantees; I simply stated that Hogwarts is safe."

"You know fine well if that chamber gets opened again then this castle will be anything but safe, Lucius Malfoy was dark enough to try and kill using a poisoned dagger in front of the goblin leader then he certainly wouldn't hesitate to release a monster on the school."

“There is no evidence to support that, only your new head of house Black stirring up even more trouble for the school.”

There was also no evidence that it was possible to shock a portrait into silence but Dumbledore's remarks almost provided it, Phineas took a few seconds to reply, “The new head of the Black family is putting his reputation on the line and backing that up with his own gold, those are the actions of an honourable man Albus. This appears to be a concept you are becoming less familiar with year by year, there have been no Hogwarts investigations or contingency plans even considered far less planned. You're gambling student's lives to uphold the reputation of the great Albus Dumbledore and I find those actions disgusting and unsupportable.”

Albus drew his wand to silence the rebellious portrait only to find he'd left his frame, on further inspection he became aware that every former head had left their frames and he was alone for the first time since acquiring this office.

With even the silver instruments that used to monitor Potter and the wards at Privet Drive no longer making a sound the unaccustomed silence forced Albus to re-evaluate the decisions that led directly to this situation.

On the evidence he now had there was no other option than to admit he'd made a momentous mistake in placing Harry with the Dursleys, that was the pivotal moment in time that everything led directly back to. Had Sirius taken baby Harry he would never have went after Peter and the boy would have been raised in a loving household and his godfather would still be alive, any justification he had for that decision turned to ashes upon viewing the boy's deplorable accommodation and living conditions. Unfortunately it also cost him his dearest and oldest friend.

His pride also took a massive hit with the realisation that the Grangers had played him for a fool, they showed Albus exactly what he wanted to see and it hurt to find out just how easily the muggles had duped him.

The only positive that he could cling to in this whole disaster was that Harry now has a loving family to help alleviate the ten years Albus sentenced him to at the Dursleys, should he have turned dark and joined forces with Voldemort then there would have been no hope for the world.

The family that were so successful in pulling the wool over his eyes would surely be capable of keeping him safe while enjoying the kind of upbringing he'd expected the boy to receive from his relatives.

The problem with admitting to one mistake though was that it opened the door for others to creep in, he couldn't deny that some of his recent staff appointments had been less than stellar and could only hope that he'd got it right this year with his new depute, defence professor and transfiguration / head of Gryffindor.

Even after speaking with the reporters today Albus expected to lose up to a quarter of the students this year and had already noticed a drop in the new first year intake. He was unsure if that was to do with the current situation or the fact that Severus now had the duty of informing families their son/daughter was magical. It never occurred to the smartest wizard of his day that muggles who were unaware their child was magical would hardly be reading about Hogwarts problems in the Daily Prophet.

-oOoOo-

The twins were in trouble, not 'detention' or 'get to your room' trouble but the kind that altered lives forever. The final kick up the backside was delivered by owl and the news that all three girls were leaving Hogwarts just added pressure to what was already a very tense situation. They'd done their homework and had all of their reasons lined up like ducks in a shooting gallery as both approached the most important meeting of their lives.

"Mum, can we talk to you?"

An icy shiver ran down her spine at this serious tone coming from her twins, her first thought was they were far too young to be fathers as

she sat down at the kitchen table to discover what had brought about this unprecedented change in attitude.

Molly thought it was Fred that got things started, "Mum we have something very serious to ask and we would like you to hear us out before passing comment."

"Our main interests at Hogwarts are potions and Quiditch, potions is extremely difficult because the professor hates us while the Gryffindor team just lost it's three chasers as well as it's seeker."

"We would like to use the opportunity Harry has provided to broaden our horizons and go to school in another country."

"This would also take the pressure off the new head of Gryffindor as we do pull quite a few pranks throughout the year."

"And the new depute would be after our blood."

"Causing friction between him and our new head of house."

Molly thought for a minute as the relief that they hadn't yet got some girl pregnant washed over her, she always knew Severus was biased against the Gryffindors and especially her family. Apparently only Harry Potter received worse treatment than the twins down in the dungeons of Hogwarts.

Part of her wanted to scream 'NO' but the fact that she was the new head of Gryffindor staid her hand, Molly was aware that teaching and being head of house was going to make this year difficult enough but here was the chance to remove undoubtedly the two worse trouble makers in her new house if not the entire school.

She had no illusions that they would stop their pranks because their mother was head of Gryffindor, the boys would just be extra careful in ensuring they weren't caught while the whole of Hogwarts knew who was responsible.

The question of Hogwarts being safe never entered her mind; Albus had said it was so therefore that must be the case. She also wasn't

concerned about not seeing them until the holidays, as this had been the usual practice with their children of school age since Bill first boarded the express.

She had thought she was going to be in the house alone from this year but Molly would now be earning nearly as much as Arthur and still getting to see Percy, Ron and Ginny every day, with Arthur flooing between the ministry and their married quarters in Hogwarts with the Burrow being put in stasis until Christmas break.

Molly could see no down side to this arrangement but decided to run it by her husband before giving a definitive answer, "I need to talk to your father about this and we'll let you know as soon as possible."

Both twins couldn't hide their grins and with shouts of "Thanks mum." headed outside, when they were far enough away from the house they grabbed each other by the arms and began jumping up and down on the spot. Both were well aware who made the decisions in their household and 'need to see your father' just meant a slight delay and gave their mother someone to blame if the decision turned out to be the wrong one.

The boys were ecstatic, with the Quidittch team in disarray, the girls going to France, greasy git now depute and their mother teaching transfiguration and head of Gryffindor the castle held no attraction for them anymore. They were still bouncing up and down but now chanting, "Bless you Saint Harry." while wondering how you pronounced that in French, Fred and George Weasley were going to Beauxbatons!

A/N Thanks for reading

Chapter 8

Albus Dumbledore sat on his 'throne' as his new depute led the severely reduced line of first years into the Hogwarts great hall heading towards the sorting hat, the headmaster had no idea what the hat's greeting was this year as it required all his considerable concentration and experience to hold his temper from exploding. The trouble was that in whatever direction he glanced there were images to make his blood boil. If he looked to his left there was his new defence professor, dressed in robes that were outlandish even by Dumbledore's standards and already pissing off anyone who had to sit near the boastful bore.

The view in front of him was of the Hogwarts great hall containing less than half the students he would normally expect to be there on the first of September while to his right was the woman who had heaped fuel onto the fire that was the raging debate of whether Hogwarts was safe. He didn't know how they found out but the press had jumped all over the fact that his new head of Gryffindor was sending two of her children elsewhere to be taught, totally ignoring the fact that she still had three children at Hogwarts including the Head Boy.

For any parents swithering on their decision the fact that a Hogwarts head of House would let her children go abroad was the final nudge needed towards them making the same choice, even looking towards the ceiling brought no relief as it mirrored the storm that was brewing outside and also matching the mood in the hall perfectly.

Albus knew this was going to be a difficult year but mistakenly thought this was the low point, it wouldn't take too long for him to realise just how wrong he was.

-oOoOo-

Hermione was sitting between her husband's legs with her back leaning on his chest as Harry's arms encircled her while together they watched the sunset over New York harbour. It was the first of September and their thoughts had been drifting elsewhere all day.

“Have you any regrets love?” Hermione asked.

Harry looked deep in thought for a moment before answering, “The only things I’ll miss about Hogwarts will be the Gryffindor Quidditch team, Hagrid and Neville. According to our latest information from Cissi the whole team has moved to France while Neville’s gran is having him home schooled. That only leaves Hagrid and compared to what we have here even his size doesn’t come close to tipping the scales in Hogwarts favour.”

It was a mischievous Hermione who asked, “Were you taking into account the fact that Draco’s staying with us now.”

He kissed the top of her head, “I think our guest has had his eyes well and truly opened in the last few weeks.”

Hermione was chuckling now, “I don’t know about opened but his eyes just might end up square shaped if he watches any more of your ‘Thundercats’ tapes, he spends hours in his room with his eyes glued to the screen.”

Harry held her tighter, “Believe it or not I know exactly where Draco is coming from, he’s having to adjust to everything he’d been told up until now being considered as wrong. I sometimes wonder how things might have turned out had I shook his hand on the Hogwarts express a year ago, I could have been sorted into Slytherin and ended up just like him.”

It was Hermione’s turn to be deep in thought as she recalled the changes Minerva’s visit had bestowed on her family’s lives, “I have to believe you would still have raced after me into that bathroom but can’t make my mind up whether Draco would have come with you.”

“We have to give him time to settle into his new world, Draco Black will need to be a different person from Draco Malfoy or the oath he took could have serious consequences.”

“I think he enjoyed the lessons today though not quite up to joining us in the gym every morning, I don’t know if he’s ready to see Nym in her exercise clothes yet.”

Harry was glad Hermione couldn't see him blushing, Nym's exercise outfits and her teasing left him red faced each morning. Any time he tried to tease her back it was as if he just dug himself a deeper hole to sink into and of course his wife thought it was bloody hilarious. Just when Harry thought he was getting the hang of this teasing business the experience would be taken to a whole new level and he was left floundering once more, it was always in fun though and Nym's comment of 'that's what happens when you're the youngest in the family' had him smiling for days.

They'd met and instantly liked the instructors Griphook had arranged for them and, with the exception of Minerva they were all American. This would enable them to portkey in one day a week and the charms on their home would prevent any of the professors from remembering where it was.

"I think the idea of having one professor per day is really going to work, we can always pick up on other subjects later on but dropping herbology, astronomy and history leaves us free to concentrate on transfiguration, potions, charms, and defence with the addition of runes and arithmancy being taught by the same professor. After living here even Draco should be able to pass muggle studies giving us seven core subjects."

Hermione couldn't hide the excitement she got from learning new things, "This means we should be able to sit our exams earlier, we have Nym and Minerva to help us with anything we struggle at plus our own library. Draco is quite capable of keeping up with us so we should be able to tear through the courses, do you think Minerva would help us become animagi?"

Harry had to smile at how well he already knew Hermione, "I have asked her and she said our magic had to stabilise first but our bond should speed that process up. She's going to teach us meditation techniques that will help when we're old enough to begin training; apparently Nym can't because she's a metamorphous and the two are incompatible."

Hermione then asked the question that had been on all of their minds, "What do you think's going to happen in Hogwarts?"

"I hope nothing," said Harry with a passion that belied his years, "I hope we're wrong and the press slaughter me for scaremongering or worse, I don't care about the gold it's costing. If we're right then there are students at Hogwarts who are going to get hurt. We don't much like Ron now but I still wouldn't wish any harm to him."

With that said both Potters headed off to bed, tomorrow would be another hard but satisfying day and they were now getting up at six to use the gym before breakfast.

-oOoOo-

The two red heads were thinking this must be some kind of record, even for them. They were shown into the Headmistress's office and they hadn't even attended a class yet, for about the first time they could remember both could truthfully claim they'd done nothing wrong.

The headmistress entered and both boys were sure Hagrid would be head over heels in love at first sight of this woman, she was, if anything taller than the Hogwarts keeper of the keys. She was dressed in a yellow robe and had accessorised with a bright yellow feather boa that must have required a full flock of birds for its construction. Her eyes held both twins in a gaze that would have them confessing any misdemeanours they'd pulled within seconds, they would have to seriously cut down on the pranking as Snape would have killed for a glower like hers.

Amazingly enough her voice was sweet and light but there was no mistaking the steel in her words, which, though in accented English was easily understandable and a lot better than their French.

"Ah gentlemen, please be aware your infamy precedes your arrival at my school. I will be totally honest with you both and say that behaviour, which may have been overlooked in Hogwarts, will not be tolerated here. Beauxbatons is running very near its full capacity of students and I won't stand for any disruptions due to childish pranks,

any trouble and you'll both be shipped off to your mother at Hogwarts. Have I made myself perfectly clear?"

"Crystal Ma'am," they answered together.

"Good because I would hate for there to be any misunderstandings here, this is an education establishment and not a test market for pranks 'R' us!"

Both wizards left her office wearing expressions akin to religious fervour.

"What a brilliant idea!"

"Yea, don't like that name though, couldn't see that ever catching on."

"What about 'Weasley Wizard Wheezes', kind of catchy don't you think?"

"Oh yes but I think we should name our first product in honour of Madam Maxime, what was your impression the first time you saw her?"

George didn't hesitate, "Big bird, big yellow bird."

"Right," said Fred, "our first product will be something that transforms the victim into a big yellow bird."

George could immediately see a problem, "Do we really want to pull a prank on someone that makes them bigger than us?"

"Good thinking, so small yellow bird."

"A Canary?"

"And we can call them..."

Together the twins announced their first product to an unsuspecting world, "Canary Creams!"

A jubilant George proclaimed, "Zonko's won't know what hit them."

Fred was always the more ambitious one though, "The world won't know what hit it."

-oOoOo-

Cissi knew the approach was coming; she was just surprised they hadn't waited a week or so.

Edmund Parkinson sat beside her in the Wizengamot restaurant, "Madam Black, we were sorry to hear of your husband's demise and offer our condolences. However you are now a very powerful player in the Wizengamot and we would like to ascertain where your sympathies lie."

The blond Black's alarm bells were immediately ringing; this was too crude, too direct meaning she was dealing with amateurs or people so powerful they didn't need to bother with social niceties.

"Member Parkinson I accept your condolences in the spirit they were offered, as to my sympathies, since I'm voting by proxy they hardly matter. My Lord Potter-Black makes the decisions that affect my family."

"As was demonstrated by your husband, situations can change incredibly quickly." Edmond didn't say any more as Amelia Bones had joined them at the table but couldn't resist a parting remark, "Big changes are coming and I would hate to see you on the wrong side of them."

Amelia watched him walk away before speaking to Cissi, "Sorry for interrupting there but that looked pretty intense."

"It was," replied a thoughtful Cissi as she tried to evaluate the level of threat she'd just been delivered and didn't like her conclusions.

Amelia was pondering over his parting remark, "These people talk of change but the only changes they crave are one's that solidify their grip on the power they wield, any changes they are in favour of would

not benefit the witches and wizards of Britain. Have you decided your position on this issue?"

Cissi nodded, "My son and I made our positions quite clear when we became Blacks and swore allegiance to our Lord, you must be aware of his position on these matters."

Amelia knew it was cards on the table time, "I know and completely agree with his position, our world stands at a crossroads and unless the correct path is chosen the magical population of Britain could find itself confined to the dark ages. I would like the opportunity to guide us down what we see as the correct path and offer an alliance between our houses with the aim of achieving this common goal. I have fought the good fight my entire adult life and cannot, no will not change my direction now."

Cissi again had a lot to chew over, Bones had just declared herself a player who opposed the darkness and wished an alliance with Harry, from her knowledge of the woman she was positive this was genuine and would be recommending the family accepted the offer.

"Thank you for such honesty and trust Amelia, I will of course pass this directly to Lord Potter-Black, we expected trouble from a selection of purebloods but apparently they have a timetable shorter than anything we had considered. Edmund's confidence is very worrying; it's almost as if their plans are all in place and just waiting for the right moment."

Amelia could see the woman was worried and trusted her assessment of the situation, "We're going to have to watch our backs and take care of our loved ones, can we change the subject for a moment?"

-oOoOo-

A CAT! a frigging cat, they did this to him over a cat.

Albus Dumbledore sat with only Fawkes and a rapidly diminishing bottle of firewhisky for company, the more he drank the sorrier he felt for himself and the more irate the beautiful phoenix became.

Albus was drowning in a firewhisky fuelled self-pity party as he could see his epitaph now, Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore, Order of Merlin, First Class, and Grand Sorcerer; Headmaster of Hogwarts; Supreme Mugwump of the International Confederation of Wizards; Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot; Conqueror of the dark wizard Grindelwald and discoverer of the 12 uses for dragon blood – SACKED because of a mangy moggie that was found petrified in a corridor.

After some more firewhisky he had to admit that Snape had played his part brilliantly, the governors had met the same night and he was unceremoniously given his marching orders and booted out the castle leaving the former death eater in charge.

Fawkes had quite enough of this; he knocked the remains of the firewhisky over onto the table before setting it aflame. Albus found himself jumping back and landing on the floor with a singed beard but his phoenix wasn't finished with him yet, perched on his chest the majestic bird began to fiercely screech at the prostrate wizard.

To Albus this was more potent than the strongest sobering charm and seemed not only to clear his head of the alcohol befuddlement but put everything else into perspective as well.

"Oh Fawkes, what have I done? The writing on the wall said 'beware' and they arrested Hagrid yet I'm lying here feeling sorry for myself. Those children are in terrible danger and my friend's in Azkaban but all I could think off was my damaged reputation." Albus Dumbledore cried like a baby while Fawkes sang a comforting song from his perch, his wizard was back on the path he'd been slowly but surely straying from.

-oOoOo-

The news from Hogwarts was not well received in New York; two people who would die to protect Hogwarts students had been removed from the castle leaving Snape in control.

"I don't know what else I could have done," Harry was sick with the thought of his friend in Azkaban, just confining Hagrid in an enclosed space would be bad enough without adding the dementors.

It was Amelia who spoke, "You got more than half the students out of Hogwarts and safe, that's more than my entire department could achieve. Fudge ordered Hagrid's arrest because he was apparently expelled the last time this happened and the incidents stopped. No investigation, no trial just directly to prison because the minister said so, our government is not supposed to work that way but my hands are again tied. It will appear in the Prophet tomorrow that Hagrid is a half giant so no tears will be shed or questions asked, it's Sirius all over again."

Hermione filled in the blanks for her parents and Harry, "Giants are considered dangerous, homicidal beasts, revealing that fact strips away all his support and rights."

Dan wasn't sure if Harry was going to explode with anger or cry, he'd heard them talking often about their large friend who had given Harry his two most precious gifts, Hedwig and his photo album. "So let me see if I've got this right, they won't take the threat to Hogwarts seriously because the warning came from an elf, when it looks to be coming true they arrest a man with no evidence to support it and, based purely on who one of his parents was they can get away with it?"

Minerva was nodding in agreement, "Not only that but they throw the most powerful wizard in the country out the castle and leave it to the tender mercies of that Slytherin, I shouldn't have left!"

Hermione tried to comfort the woman, "You're more than needed here, where does this leave us in Britain Cissi?"

"I think these incidents are going to be used to re-align the government even more towards pureblood philosophy, Fudge may not know it but he has staked his career to Hagrid being the bad guy with the attacks now stopping. We all know Hagrid's innocent so Fudge will be lucky if he's still minister by Halloween and I can't see any chance of him lasting until Christmas. I think they'll also move to

get rid of Amelia here, I hope by sacking rather than an accident but they won't want her around asking questions or stirring up trouble."

Amelia had quickly come to respect the fact that this was no dumb blond, that title was reserved for her former husband. She was now certain who had the business head in that family and had to agree with her assessment that she would be next on the list behind Fudge, "Depending on how discussions proceed later I may just jump before I'm pushed, I could do more good with my reputation still intact."

Hermione agreed, "I think Griphook needs to speed up our withdrawal and I'd like to contact the Longbottom's to offer them at the very least another option. There's no way that we can help anyone at Hogwarts since the best minds in the wizarding world couldn't figure out what was doing the attacking far less where it's hiding."

Harry also added, "I think it's time for Cissi to get out to, what about the Tonks – do we need to get them out as well?"

Cissi conceded, "I'll talk to the Longbottom's then have a chat with Andi and Ted, I agree with Amelia that things could go bad very quickly and I don't really want to be around when it does."

Emma was quick to jump in, "We have plenty of space here and they're all welcome."

Hermione was trying not to get annoyed at her mother offering their home to everyone while Harry was delighted that she thought of the place as home enough to make the offer.

Harry and Hermione walked into their second meeting just as unsure of the situation as their first, Nym was there in her big sis role she revelled in so Harry got straight to the point.

"Draco, Susan you both know our backgrounds and I'm totally out of my depth here. I don't want to knock your customs but as head of Draco's house I won't let this betrothal proceed unless you both want this. I know this might be awkward for you but better that than married to someone you don't want to be with."

Draco answered quickly, "Thanks Harry, when my father made arrangements with the Parkinson's I was still a child so I really appreciate being consulted this time. Unlike Pansy, Susan is a beautiful, bright, bubbly girl who I would be delighted to get to know better."

It was a blushing Susan who replied, "I'm also glad of this opportunity to give my opinion, had it been Draco Malfoy I would have been using this chance to say no but I think I like Draco Black and definitely want to get to know him better."

It was a now much relieved Harry who had an easy decision to make, "Ok guys, as long as this is what you want I will give it my blessing as Lord Potter-Black."

Susan hesitated a second before asking a question, "Harry, could I ask a big favour, I understand from my aunt that you want me to come here for school and I think that would be great but could we include Hannah? She's been my best friend like forever and we do everything together."

Draco's eyes glazed over before a smack on the back of his head from big sis Nym set him right, "Mind, gutter, out!"

The laughter at Draco's predicament and the fact he accepted the ribbing with good grace cemented Susan's decision, next to Harry Draco had been the best looking guy in Hogwarts but with the worse personality. Having spent some time chatting, the change to him was a revelation, especially his attitude to all things muggle and if Hannah came here it would be perfect.

"Ok Susan, I'll talk to your aunt about getting permission from her parents to come here," the former puffs reaction told the Potters that they'd made the right decision, whether Draco and Susan would come to anything was entirely up to them as there would be no forced marriages in any house they were head of.

Amelia promised to talk to Hannah's parents and thanked them for even considering it; Harry asked the question he was terrified of the answer to.

“Can we do anything to help Hagrid or would we just be drawing attention to him, I can’t help wondering if I hadn’t intervened would Sirius still be alive?”

Amelia could see the cracks where the boy was desperately trying to become a man and once again had her decision to align her house with this wizard confirmed, there were people in Britain who had known Hagrid for years not as concerned about him as Harry. “Sirius was a high profile prisoner who could have brought careers grinding to a halt if he’d been found innocent, Hagrid is a simple soul who will be so glad of being released he would probably disappear into the forest and never mention it again. When Fudge goes they might just release him but if they know we’re behind any movement to make this happen I think we would be lessening his chances”

Harry lay in bed holding Hermione; this was the best part of the day though waking up beside her ran it pretty close. Here he could be just Harry, the luckiest person in the world because he had Hermione in his arms.

She kissed him, “What’s up love, worried about Hagrid?”

He held her tighter, “I desperately want to help him but the best thing I can do for him might be nothing and I hate that.”

She could only hold her husband and hope this turned out alright, Hagrid was one of the most important adults in his life and she was worried what his reaction would be if anything happened to their friend at the hands of the ministry. “We both know Hagrid would never have left Hogwarts while Dumbledore was there, when he gets out we can make sure he’s ok and give him a job looking after Potter manor.”

The fell asleep wrapped in each others arms.

-oOoOo-

Albus had a glass of firewhisky in his hand for the first time in almost five years but this was a special occasion, Harry Potter turned seventeen today.

Gazing into the amber liquid the old wizard asked himself for at least the millionth time if he made the right decision telling Harry of his destiny that day in the Hogwarts infirmary, things had been going bad before that but seemed to accelerate out of all control from that day on.

He let his thoughts wander backwards as he seemed to do more and more these days; the attack at the castle when it came was swift and deadly leaving four students dead in a corridor. The school was closed and the evacuation began immediately, it was only then that they noticed the youngest Weasley was missing. Molly was hysterical and they had to physically drag her out of the castle. The elves, ghosts, portraits and teams of aurors searched the castle from top to bottom but her body was never found as Hogwarts now lay empty and abandoned.

The ministry's reaction was swift and predictable; Fudge was sacked being replaced with Dolores Umbridge. Amelia had resigned the week before citing 'irreparable differences' with the direction the ministry was taking. She proved to be more of a seer than Sibyll as just about everyone with a light connection lost their jobs, the only exceptions being Arthur and Amos who'd just lost children at Hogwarts so were spared for now.

Then the incident that changed everything for Albus, now that it was blatantly obvious that Hagrid had nothing to do with the attacks he began lobbying to get him released. The Prophet headline announcing Rubeus Hagrid had been killed while trying to escape from Azkaban nearly saw Albus sent there as his temper exploded in the ministry building, leading to his vault being confiscated to replace the statues and fountain he destroyed. The idea that Hagrid could sneak along a corridor was a sick joke that Albus didn't find funny in the least, the bastards had got away with murdering Sirius so couldn't see any reason why a half giant should be any different.

The laws soon started changing to favour the purebloods even more than they already did and an exodus began from people of mixed blood and muggle borns that the ministry appeared to be encouraging but all that came to an abrupt and sudden end then the killings began.

It started with the Creevey family, muggles who had three magical children but found themselves the first casualties of the new war and supplied Albus with his new calling. His underground railway helped witches and wizards escape the persecution in Britain being very successful in the beginning but the ministry got more and more vicious.

He had his suspicions that the ministry was now being run by someone else and after all the death eaters were released from Azkaban and quietly given jobs in the ministry he was pretty sure, Voldemort had returned and was running Britain from the background while Albus found himself declared an outlaw for working against the ministry. He was in good company as Harry already had that title though so far he appeared to be the only one who was at least one step ahead of the ministry.

Very early on they tried a smear campaign in the Prophet only to have it backfire spectacularly; their claim that Harry didn't give them enough information and was then somehow responsible for the attacks at Hogwarts was a lie too far. There were parents the length and breadth of the country thanking Harry Potter that their children hadn't been in Hogwarts at the time and weren't prepared to have their families saviour slandered like that; the aurors had to be called to protect the newspaper offices.

They then tried to confiscate the former Malfoy manor to replace Hogwarts only to discover that all his properties were protected by the fidelius charm, apparently Snape was fit to be tied as he fancied ruling the roost at the manor as headmaster of the new school.

A school had indeed been opened but was now more about teaching the purebloods their place in society and demonstrating to the rest what there's now was rather than any academic pursuits. Tales of purebloods leading the muggle borns around by means of a collar and lead were only the beginnings of deeds performed in the name of

education. Harry's foresight had already got most of them safely out of the country as their parents clamoured to flee Britain and join them, needless to say Severus Snape was the only former Hogwarts professor working there.

Laws were then passed making it illegal for anyone other than a pureblood to be educated abroad and giving financial assistance to aid this branded you an outlaw.

They got an even bigger shock though when they finally gained access to the outlaw Potter-Black's vaults only to find them empty, Harry had already moved every Knut he owned out the country. The ministry was left looking like idiots again and whoever was giving the boy advice really knew their stuff. The real shock was when they tried for his family and friends to find them gone as well with even the Longbottoms being spirited out of St Mungo's, that had impressed the hell out of Albus and he figured the Dursleys would be safe as even he didn't know where Vernon's sister lived or whether they'd bought a new house since.

Harry had continued to help as people who Albus was trying to get out the country would suddenly find funds appearing in their muggle bank account or vault as whispers began to emerge of a new group calling themselves 'liberty' who'd begun fighting back.

Albus had finally made contact with them just over a year ago outside a small 'camp' though the memory brought a rye chuckle from the old wizard's throat.

Flashback

Albus watched from the undergrowth as the scene before him played out like something from the worst days of the Roman Empire, purebloods were gods who had the power of life and death over the chattel. Chattel being anyone else not of pureblood and in front of him was a conditioning camp, they were expected to be demure and obey their betters every whim and here they were taught the consequences of not carrying out that task.

He was waiting for darkness to fall in the hope of being able to rescue a couple of these prisoners, Albus was in all practicality working with his hands tied behind his back because the magical net that covered the country had been perverted to suit the ministry's new requirements. Accidental underage magic use could now see you and your whole family end up in a place like this if you didn't have the right bloodlines, it had also been specifically set to look for his magical signature so casting a single spell would have him up to his arse in ministry death eaters within seconds.

It was then he felt the wand point press into the back of his neck and only his recognition of the voice that whispered to him kept Albus still.

"You're getting a bit too old for this shit Albus, stay there and let the youngsters show you how it's done."

So he did and what he saw was a revelation, they moved like black ghosts as they swiftly and silently eased their way through the camp. Not a sound was made and no prisoners taken with the camp being overrun in minutes as they started to move the prisoners to a central area for transportation out of here, not one spell had been cast so the magical net was blissfully unaware that a ministry camp had just been wiped out.

"I would suggest you make yourself scarce old man, when we portkey these people out of here the magical detectors in the ministry are going to light up like a Christmas tree and this area would become extremely unhealthy to anyone with the last name Dumbledore."

He turned around to look into the eye of Amelia Bones, the scar tissue and eye patch told of a violent end to her monocle wearing days.

"Yes Albus, that's why I leave this to the younger generation and work in planning and observing now, seems we both picked the same spot to observe the action from. There's always a place in our organisation for a warrior of the light?"

"I'm flattered Amelia but prefer to work alone now, that way if I make a mistake it's only my life on the line. At one time I would have

balked at the methods used here tonight but that wizard died with my friend Hagrid, they want to turn the clock back centuries then so be it. You live by the sword then you die by the sword or whatever your people were using down there.”

Albus heard a slight buzz and watched as Amelia removed a device from her pocket, then a voice sent the old wizard's brain into hyperdrive, “Auntie, are you ok?”

“Sorry for alarming you love but just chatting to a very old friend here, code green so don't worry. Am ready to go when you are.”

“Right, beginning countdown now!”

Albus felt a wave of hope pass through him that had the old wizard feeling better than he had in years, “Tell Harry he's back.”

Amelia just nodded, “We know Albus and we're working on it now get the hell out of here.”

As she and everyone else disappeared by portkey it was a rejuvenated Albus Dumbledore who took the good advice he'd been given and got his arse well away from there.

End of Flashback

It was only later that he recalled the insignia on her robes, a hand carrying a flaming torch but with a phoenix emerging from the flames. The significance was not lost on the old wizard, their country was going to have to burn away the darkness for them to emerge stronger into the light.

Half a century ago Albus had fought a war and, like any civilized person never wanted to repeat the experience again. He now realised they were wrong and hadn't dealt with the conditions that created a dark lord therefore promptly found themselves facing another, even if his original, somewhat naïve plan for Harry to defeat Voldemort had succeeded the conditions would still have been ripe for the next one to come along.

He also wasn't forgetting that the purebloods had gained total control of the government before Voldemort even appeared this time and that they were the bastards who murdered Hagrid and Sirius, with his supporters already in control of the ministry he could just walk right in and take over without anyone being the wiser.

Albus took another sip of his drink and the warm feeling that passed through his body was not entirely induced by the firewhisky, that Harry Potter was putting together a force to liberate Britain was a thought powerful enough to warm his old bones on even the coldest of nights.

He held up his glass in salute and said "Happy Birthday Harry" before draining the contents and smashing the glass into the fireplace, his next drink would be in a free Britain.

-oOoOo-

Edmund Parkinson hated entering the throne room because you were never sure which dark lord you were going to be faced with, the young man who considered everything carefully or the red eyed lunatic who was more likely to have you leaving the room carrying your bollocks in your hand, the voice bade him enter and his spirits immediately rose at the blue eyes which greeted his presence.

He knelt and gave his news, "My Lord, we have word of Potter. A booking has been made for a surprise birthday party in a muggle establishment to celebrate his coming of age." Edmund would never admit that it was entirely down to luck his daughter had discovered this from reading someone else's mail.

"Well people should get what they wish for on their birthday so if he wants a surprise then that is what he'll get." Voldemort's eyes suddenly had a decidedly red tinge to them as his handsome face contorted with rage, "Send a squad, kill everyone there but bring me back Potter. Damaged is permissible but he better be breathing or else you won't be."

"Understood my Lord," replied the death eater as he backed out the door, hoping against hope to escape without being tortured.

End of Part One

A/N part 2 will either be Chapter 9 or the first Chapter of 'Most Important Thing'

This will depend on whether or not I have to up the rating on the chapter that's still waiting in my head to be written.

Thanks for reading

Chapter 9

The fact that the four students found dead at Hogwarts were all puffs really hit Nym, Susan and Hannah hard but it was the news Hagrid had been murdered that almost broke Harry, Minerva had to brew a calming draft as the distraught wizard was excused lessons for the day. Hermione never left his side and swore she would get even with the people who could break her husband's heart like this, he'd sobbed for hours and his throat was now raw as he clung to her hardly able to speak.

These events hardened everyone's attitudes over the coming weeks and months with all their trainers noticing the difference, this was now as real as it gets with six people dead and five of the victims students just like them.

Griphook had got in touch to say that the Longbottoms were looking to leave Britain and wanted to accept their offer of assistance so within the week Neville and his gran were added to their merry not-so-little group.

The hotel floor was easily large enough to accommodate everyone and they even had four distinct hang-out areas that just seemed to naturally evolve, Augusta Longbottom had a lounge set up to resemble the one she'd left in Britain and this was easily the most formal room on the whole floor, it was christened old-school.

The students had an area that had a play station, juke box, pool table and even a pinball machine earning it the name kiddies corner though Dan and Ted could often be found there.

Emma and Andi were the main users of the large informal lounge that had a massive TV at the centre of it though Minerva always appeared as soon as a romantic film made its way into the video player, this was nicknamed 'the hankie hall' as the ladies always seemed to be in tears at the end of the movie.

There was also the library, which everyone just automatically behaved quietly in, and it was furnished with tables and comfortable chairs placed throughout. With each bedroom also having its own

sitting room people could have as much or as little company as they wished and this practically eliminated anyone getting so wound-up that serious arguments started, that and Nym was likely to smack you upside your head if you did.

Neville had trouble accepting Draco had changed but since he was also having trouble with all things muggle Nym very cleverly paired both boys for 'muggle studies' where Draco had the job of teaching Neville how things worked in their new home.

Draco got speaking to his mother about how Neville was missing his herbology lessons and asking if there was anything they could do which led to Neville's balcony being glassed-in and forming a greenhouse right outside his bedroom thus kick-starting a friendship that would grow with the years.

Harry had been adamant that they take at least one day a week off but when they went into New York the fact that the others were couples kind of forced Neville and Hannah to spend time together. Neither found this a hardship as they both enjoyed each others company, they became good friends and left the option of being more in the future well and truly open. Nym was big sister / den mother to the whole group but they quickly found her weakness. The group always seemed to find a large shoe shop that kept her happy for hours, allowing them time to do whatever they wanted.

Nym was unsure if there would be any aurors in Britain by the time she graduated though she had the former head of department here to give her lessons and intended to make full use of it, she quickly had company because the other six thought it was a great idea and soon wanted included.

Her professors were saying she could take her NEWT's a year early and cover more advanced studies for her last year, with potions, charms, transfiguration, defence and muggle studies she would be more than qualified for any career she was interested in. When you factored in now spending one day a week being trained by Amelia then she was miles ahead of any other auror candidate.

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"There can be no doubt then?" Griphook asked.

"No," replied Ragnok "We have positive sightings from the elves. I had hoped for more time though they should still be safe for now but this is not something we can keep from them. Apparently Minister Umbridge wasn't a death eater but when faced with the choice of taking the dark mark or dying she quickly made her mind up, all that really happened there is the puppet got a new master. They're using this technique sparingly and sacking anyone they're sure would say no, Voldemort will have total control of the ministry and the general magical population won't even know he's back."

"Have we any idea how he managed his return?"

"The best analysis our experts can give is that he used a horcrux and took someone's life force to give him a new body, there is speculation though that he tried to join with his spirit and it didn't proceed according to plan. Their guess is that neither part of the soul wanted to accede control to the other and both are now living in and fighting for control of the same body."

"I'll go to New York and personally make our offer; the Americans are also watching the situation very closely and are interested in offering special training as well."

"If Lord Potter accepts I want you based over there to provide any assistance they require"

Griphook bowed to his leader and left to make the arrangements.

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All thoughts on a party to celebrate Nym's five NEWT's were forgotten with the news that Griphook had brought to New York; Voldemort was back and ruling magical Britain from behind the scenes.

They were all present and everyone was shocked but none could fail to notice the reactions of the Grangers and Potters were far more severe.

“Harry, do you know something we don’t?” a worried Nym asked.

He looked around the table at all these people who had tied their lives to his and reckoned it was time they knew the truth. “Before I was born a prophecy was made concerning me and Voldemort, he’ll be coming after me.”

Nym was on her feet; “Well the bastard is going to have to go through me first, I’ve put too much time and effort into making you a decent brother to let some shit take you away from me now.”

Draco didn’t hesitate for a second, he now considered his oath to the house of Black to be the best thing he ever did and so also stood, “I stand with my liege lord and friends, my life and my wand are yours to command.”

Cissi was almost in tears she was so proud, she’d spent the last year watching her son become the young man his mother knew he could be and the betrothal she and Amelia arranged that day in the Wizengamot dining room was working out better than they hoped.

Neville then stood, “Cissi and Andi please excuse me but if that bitch Bellatrix is back walking the streets with her husband and brother then I swear vengeance in the name of Longbottom, I stand with Harry.”

Susan stood staring straight at her aunt, “I stand with my betrothed and with my friends.”

Hannah joined them, “Well there’s no bloody way you’re leaving me behind, I wasn’t in Hufflepuff for nothing and I stand with my friends.”

There were a lot of scared but proud parents and guardians sitting around that table though no one was surprised when Amelia and Minerva stood proclaiming their support, even Augusta looked determined to help in any way she could.

Harry was deeply touched, "Thanks guys, Griphook please tell me you have some options for us?"

"We don't know the complete prophecy but do know one of you must kill the other and that Harry will have a power Voldemort has not, we plan to give you as many 'powers' as possible in the hope that you need only one. Goblins are recognised masters of stealth and blades; we offer to teach you and your friends this mastery." Griphook spun and a concealed knife left his hand and imbedded in the wooden door.

Nym was ecstatic, "Oh yea, I so want to learn how to do that!"

"Now when you first came here I approached Amelia's counterpart about finding teachers who were good but trustworthy and discreet, it turns out you have been receiving your lessons from the best that American magical law enforcement has to offer and they've been singing your praises to their boss who wants to meet you. Unlike aurors in Britain these guys use a mixture of muggle and magical devices which is again a power Voldemort won't have."

Dan felt helpless; he and Ted had spent many a night talking about this since they shared the experience of their only daughter's who would stick with Harry to the bitter end. Both had found themselves on the support team and Dan at least wasn't too happy with this, Dan was the group's trainer and they were now up to two sessions a day while Ted had become the unofficial quartermaster who so far had managed to find them anything they needed. Ted was not a powerful wizard but was smart enough to know that and used what talents he had to make his family's lives quite comfortable, Dan on the other hand approached Amelia at least once a week saying that with a gun in his hand he was a match for any wizard but so far she showed no sign of weakening.

Andi was a trained healer and as well as teaching the group battlefield first aid was in the process of setting up an infirmary to keep up with their injuries as the training intensified, her role was well defined in the group though it broke her heart to see these children make ready for a war they all knew would be knocking on their door.

Nym was practically drooling, the top British auror was already training her and now there was the possibility of learning from the goblins and the best that America had to offer. This was better than the four O's and an E she just got for her exams.

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Hermione was sitting cross-legged on their bed facing her husband with her eyes closed while becoming more and more frustrated; she wanted this so much but just couldn't seem to let herself go. She heard the growl and wasn't sure if it came from her or Harry but when the tongue licked her face she surmised it was her husband, she opened her eyes and looked deeply into the green ones she knew so well but this time they belonged to a black panther.

"Oh Harry you did it!" she now had both arms around the great cat's neck as she gave it one of her trade mark hugs, she could still feel Harry in her head through their still strengthening bond and stared into the panther's eyes. "I'm so proud of you and you look gorgeous as a cat, Nym's going to freak the second she see's you."

Hermione continued to stare into those eyes as if communicating with the Panther before appearing to melt into them and suddenly there were two panthers exploding off the bed and frolicking around the large room, they played chase before the male leaped over the sofa and pinned his mate to the floor. Two powerful cats became two powerful laughing teens as they rolled around on the carpet, "Matching forms, I can't believe it."

Harry kissed her, "Did you ever doubt it? I can still communicate with you even in our forms, which gives us a massive advantage when searching or hunting. I say we stroll into breakfast transformed."

Hermione could only giggle her agreement as she pulled him down for another kiss.

Breakfast was eventful to say the least as a pair of black panthers ambled in and took their places at the table, Nym's scream was easily the loudest but she at least had worked out what was going on, "Merlin you two are beautiful, oh you're just so cute I could kiss you."

She ran round the table and had both panthers in a headlock before they transformed back to the total amazement of their parents, Emma's jaw had almost hit the floor. "You two that was unbelievable, I sat here and watched it and it's still unbelievable."

They transformed back and padded over to Emma to allow her to pet them, "Minerva when you told us my daughter was a witch I thought we might have to buy a black cat, I didn't know she was going to turn into one."

Dan just saw two very powerful predators that would have a serious advantage if they needed to escape or fight.

Draco thought it was fitting that the heads of the Black house were totally black while everyone else was figuring to get them collars, squeaky toys and a scratching post for the kiddie's corner.

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Jim Brogan was Amelia's counterpart in the States and he was not happy, the news filtering out of Britain recently would spoil anyone's day.

They were holding their normal meeting where Jim was going to pass on this information and his fears, "Some of the people in the ministry were forced to take the dark mark or their family would suffer so they have been very quietly passing information out the country. It started where it always does with the media, bemoaning the lot of the poor impoverished pureblood whose wealth, culture and heritage was being eroded by these new magical users who were taking over."

Andi just had to jump in, "I'll bet it didn't mention that these purebloods were stupid, lazy, inbreed bastards anywhere in that propaganda?"

"You are of course right Mrs Tonks, Voldemort realised that the people leaving the country were taking a lot of the wealth with them and what's the point of being a supreme ruler if there's no one left to rule over. Thanks to your groups efforts we estimate that about sixty

percent of those most vulnerable were able to escape the country and we know you're still providing aid but the stories reaching us of the ones that didn't make it have our ministry really concerned."

Cissi voiced their own concerns, "We receive most of our information from elves via the goblins but, like you are also very worried. Remus has reported a site near one of the Potter properties that just suddenly had heavy wards and powerful anti muggle charms all over it, he's waiting to find out what we want to do about it."

"I think we should go and take a look," Harry held his hand up to forestall the barrage of objections he knew would be coming his way, "Hermione and I have unique advantages here and we'll take Amelia and Remus with us, we're only going for a look so what could be the harm in that?"

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Hermione's diamond portkey had been reset to their home in New York and that's where it took her and everyone she was touching, which happened to be a bleeding Amelia and Remus who she was lying rather inelegantly across while gripping a very angry black panther by the scruff of the neck.

"ANDI! We need medical help now!"

Dan raced in and made to approach his daughter to be faced with a set of bloody fangs, "Dad stop, Harry's not himself yet and thinks you're threatening me."

Nym got down on her knees and crawled towards the panther that was covered in blood, "Harry, come back to us so we can heal you."

She had his head pulled into her chest before Hermione answered, "Don't worry Nym, the blood's not his. Remus and Amelia are the ones that got injured."

Draco was trying to comfort a hysterical Susan at the sight of her aunt's mutilated face as Andi attempted to stop the bleeding, Harry

transformed back and held Nym while looking for his wife who quickly joined them in a three-way hug.

“What happened to her eye?” Andi asked.

“They cut it out and left it lying on the ground, they were just about to start on her other one when we got there.” The tremble in Hermione’s voice wasn’t needed to portray the horror of that image.

Nym got them on their feet and heading towards their bedroom to clean up as both were splattered with blood, her own clothes would have to be changed as well.

Harry stopped just before they left the room, “Cissi could you get hold of Jim Brogan, ask him if he could bring a pensieve. Susan I’m so sorry.” With that they left.

Dan was pacing up and down in the large lounge and only the fact he knew his daughter was uninjured prevented his building temper from blowing a gasket but if he didn’t find out what happened soon then all bets were off.

Seeing his daughter covered in blood, even someone else’s blood was not how he imagined it would be when she was a little girl. Dan was well aware Harry would protect her with his life but he’d been against them going in the first place.

Jim Brogan arrived and Harry, Hermione and Nym followed not ten minutes later, the big surprise was a heavily bandaged Amelia being helped into a seat by Draco and Susan.

“I had to see this and apologise to Harry and Hermione, Remus and I behaved like rank amateurs tonight. We just assumed we were far enough away and safe so leaned against a tree for a chat; I think they’ve reconfigured the magical net because two minutes after we cast warming charms on ourselves we were ambushed. They must target the areas around certain locations and if any of you had behaved like that I would have chewed your arses off, this was not your fault kids we actually let you down tonight.”

Harry nodded stoically before removing a memory and placing it in the pensieve, "This is not pretty so be warned, no one here will think any less of you if you wish to leave." As he expected nobody moved an inch so he started the memory and sat back down between Nym and Hermione.

Harry proved to be a master of the understatement, it wasn't pretty - it was barbaric. Whispers of atrocities being carried out in the name of re-education were whispers no more, both had done well to hold back from charging straight in there and had silently promised they'd return with no prisoners being taken.

The two panthers were making their way back to where they'd left Remus and Amelia when both heard the screaming, they were already angry beyond reason at what they'd seen tonight and anyone hurting their friends could expect no quarter.

Augusta shouted stop and the memory froze, "That's Rabastan and Rudolphus Lestrangle!"

"That 'was' Rabastan and Rudolphus Lestrangle," said Harry as he continued the memory.

Two unknown, probably newly recruited death eaters were having fun taking turns administering the cruciatus curse on Remus while the Lestrangle brothers were using wicked knives to take their revenge on the woman who led the team that arrested them. Death was upon them in a flash of claws and teeth, the panthers were merciless and the death eaters screams soon became gurgles then silence.

Hermione transformed and dragged Amelia over beside Remus, panther Harry looked ready to take on all comers but answered his mates call, she grabbed him by the scruff of the neck before throwing herself on top of the two bodies and shouting "Thunderbirds are go!"

The memory ended but they all still stared at where the images had been, everyone had their own thoughts on what they'd just seen but all had tears in their eyes.

Augusta broke the silence, "Lord and Lady Potter-Black the house of Longbottom owes you a debt of honour that we will repay anyway you wish," she announced formally before adding, "If you would excuse me I intend to retire to my lounge and get seriously drunk."

"The house of Bones also owes a debt and I would love to join you Augusta but I promised Andi I would be right back to the infirmary as soon as I saw this."

"I'm with you Augusta," chipped in Minerva before Harry interrupted.

"Ladies wait, let's have no more talk of debts between us and instead concentrate on what needs to be done. Amelia I'm sorry but stunning and petrifying is no longer an option for these people, we won't be arresting them but will destroy them like the evil creatures they are. Walking away and leaving those tortured souls was the hardest thing we've ever done but our inner selves were telling us this was not what was needed, we both swore we would return and free the prisoners. Their tormentors will die like those death eaters tonight, when we saw what was happening to you and Remus we didn't even hesitate. If you brutally torture someone for your own enjoyment that takes you outside the norms of human behaviour and our only regret is not getting to you both quicker, is there anyone here who doesn't think they deserved to die?"

The mood in the room was to tool-up, head right back there and rescue everyone.

Jim Brogan gave them the American ministry's official position, "We cannot become involved in what is basically an internal dispute in a friendly country, unofficially, apart from people on the ground we will aid you any and every way we possibly can. Ideally we would like to see a British force training on American soil under Lord Potter-Black to take back their country."

"I have no wish to lead anyone other than those in this room who have sworn to stand by me, I would gladly throw my support behind such a group if it was lead by our next minister, Amelia Bones."

Jim Brogan looked confused until Hermione filled in the blanks, "When this is over neither Harry or myself want anything more than to go somewhere quiet and increase the number of Potters in the world. If we can get those people out will your ministry grant them shelter or will we have to make other arrangements?"

"If I can get a copy of that memory to show the minister then I can guarantee it."

Cissi wasn't happy with that, "Can we give you a version that doesn't show Hermione's transformation? That's one of our biggest secrets and we wouldn't want it getting back to Voldemort."

"That's a very good idea and sorry that I didn't think of that first, I'm prepared to take an oath that information won't leave this room."

"That's not necessary Jim, what is required though is training and equipment to get those people out of there."

"I can but it's going to be hard to fit it around your already full schedules."

"Jim our schedules just cleared, what are a few OWL's or NEWT's compared to peoples lives? We need training to get people out and take people out putting ourselves at as little risk as possible."

Jim nodded his agreement and took the shortened version of the memory away with him, he was going to have a busy few days but these people would get the best he had to offer.

Things were breaking up when Dan asked to speak to Harry, he'd been expecting this as Hermione had been not only put in danger but also killed two death eaters.

They went out onto the large balcony and Dan stood with his back to Harry leaning on the railing and looking out over the harbour.

"It's hard for a father to accept that he's no longer the most important male in his daughter's life but when she's only thirteen at the time then it's pretty near impossible to express those feelings and if I've

behaved poorly to you in any way because of this then I apologise. I would have preferred my daughter to have a normal courtship, engagement and then marriage but I could not have wished for her to pick a better man than the one she has chosen. I was very proud of both of you tonight but watching your precious memories made me realise that without you my family would have been in that disgusting place. There are no words to express how grateful I am and you already have the heart of our daughter but what I'm badly trying to say here is that you're the best thing that's ever happened to our family."

Harry didn't know how to respond to that, he'd connected with Mum almost instantly but Dan had always held back a bit. Here was the acceptance he craved all those years spent with the Dursleys and a man who was big enough to admit when he was wrong, Harry could only mutter, "Thanks Dan."

Dan's reply was also choked with emotion, "Harry you've been married to my daughter for over three years now, could we give 'Dad' a try?"

"Ok dad," what started off as a handshake became a hug that was interrupted when Hermione burst onto the balcony. She'd felt Harry's emotions go haywire and thought her dad was giving him grief for tonight so had burst in there to give him a piece of her mind, the sight of the two most important men in her life embracing took her breath away.

Both men were now trying to wipe their eyes so she didn't notice, "I just wish I didn't have patients tomorrow or I could have joined Augusta and Minerva with whatever they're drinking."

Hermione was delighted by what she found as she knew her dad still struggled with her whole marriage, "Dad you do know that Jake can get you a hangover cure that will instantly sober you up in the morning?"

He tried to look indignant, "No I bloody didn't, your mum and I are going to have a drink with some friends so if you'll excuse me."

He headed off to find his wife with the sound of his daughter giggling in his ears.

The morning brought a visit from a serious Nym, "I was thinking we need to start small, get a family out before they get snatched while working our way up to taking on a full camp. If we get the right information we could pull this off, we would need to move very quickly though."

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Roy Macdonald had just put Natalie to bed then found himself faced with a black clad figure with a large knife at his wife's throat, a pressure in his back and a hand on his shoulder told him there was more than one intruder.

A woman left his daughters bedroom carrying Natalie in her arms when another man spoke, "Mr Macdonald we mean you and your family no harm but you must come with us, please just stay calm and we'll be gone in seconds."

Roy had no idea what happened but they were suddenly elsewhere and if he was not mistaken New York, the knives disappeared as Natalie was handed to his wife and they were asked to take a much needed seat.

"I'm sorry about the dramatics but we needed you to come quickly and quietly with us and this seemed like the best way, tonight another group was coming to take you away because Natalie is a witch. All the people who took you out your house tonight were witches and wizards but there are some who would hurt Natalie because her parents are normal and not magical, my wife is like Natalie as her parents are dentists and had to flee Britain for their safety. Natalie performed accidental magic and was scheduled to be picked-up in the next twenty four hours, I know you must feel like you're having a bad dream but let us convince you we're speaking the truth."

Hermione performed some magic and then led an excited Natalie away for some milk and cookies, "My wife took Natalie to another room because we don't want her to see these images."

The pensive memory of the camp had both Macdonalds feeling sick, "You would have been taken to a place like this, we can help you anyway we can but Britain is no longer safe for you. A room has been prepared so please stay the night and think about how we can help, this is not a prison and you're free to leave whenever you want but we genuinely do want to help."

They were shown into a luxurious room where both parents spent the night hugging their daughter, they still were not sure what was going on but the people who kidnapped them were looking after them and those images of that camp were burned into their brains for all time. The Macdonalds were by no means wealthy and these people seemed to have money to burn so if there was another motive other than what they claimed then it was beyond their limited knowledge. The most important thing though was they were all together and seemed to be in no danger at the moment.

Nym was hugging everyone, her plan had worked like clockwork and three people still had their liberty, this caused her to pause. "I just had a thought on what we could call ourselves!"

-oOoOo-

Pansy was staying with Daphne Greengrass for the first week of the holidays since they hardly saw one another now that Daphne attended Beauxbatons, her father had thought having someone else pay for his daughter to get a better education was the Slytherin thing to do.

It was the letter her friend had received last night that intrigued Pansy, Daphne looked disappointed and wouldn't talk about it so when she went for a shower next morning Pansy went straight for the drawer that she'd 'hidden' it in.

Noticing who the sender was she wondered what could be upsetting in a note from her roommate Lavender Brown but was blown away by the implications of the letter.

Dear Daph

Have found out where the party is and am even more determined to get in there though how I'm going to get my parents to take me to New York is something I'm still working on. Katie Bell let it slip that she's going there for three days and the party of the decade is on a luxury yacht in the harbour, can you imagine how romantic that will be? It's our duty to make sure the two most beautiful witches in Britain (us) are at Potter's coming of age celebration, can't believe I shared a dorm with his wife for a year and still didn't get an invite! The thought of Bones and Abbot being there and us not is driving me crazy, any ideas on how we could gatecrash would be appreciated. All I've got at the moment is the two of us offer to screw Oliver Woods if he'd take us but his fiancée would certainly object. As you can probably tell am getting desperate here so write back soon.

Lav.

Pansy knew she'd have to get this information to her father, the fact that Draco would be there with that Bones bitch was the icing on the cake. Just because she didn't want Draco didn't mean someone else could have him.

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When Nym heard the arrangements she hit the roof, "Emma what were you thinking?"

Emma was not for backing down, "I was thinking my son could have one night where he could just be normal and celebrate like everyone else, all the arrangements are done in my name so Potter isn't mentioned anywhere. Minerva helped me with his friends and even told me to send someone called Lavender's invitation last as she would gossip it all over the country."

Nym tried to explain, "Because we're living in this bubble we created you still don't understand just how famous Harry is, this is the biggest social event in about the last fifty years. There is no way this is going to be kept quiet and we will have people coming out the woodwork, I'm in charge of security for the group and this should have been run

past me at the planning stage, not after most of the invitations had been issued.”

Emma had tears in her eyes, “They couldn’t have a wedding, they had a mission the day after Hermione’s seventeenth and now you’re telling me we can’t celebrate Harry’s? We’re missing the point of all this if we can’t actually live our lives because of fear.”

Nym had her arm round the woman, the Grangers had kept their practice going otherwise they would have been driven nuts just sitting waiting for the next mission and hoping everyone came home safely. “I agree we need to live and my job is to make sure that we do by keeping everyone alive, if Voldemort finds out about this then we can be certain he will send some people to wish Harry a happy birthday but my real fear is the guests. We’re going to have to screen them for polyjuice, imperio, weapons and poisons before we let them anywhere near the party, I’ll ask Jim Brogan to handle that side of it and the team will need to be on high alert and carrying the tools of the trade. I’m sorry Emma and I know that’s not what you wanted but that’s the reality of the situation, sooner or later they’re going to find us but we don’t need to make it easy for them.”

“I’m sorry Nym you do a wonderful job of looking after them and I can’t thank you enough, it’s just so hard sometimes and I just wanted one night where we could forget we were at war. I’ve spent the last five years watching you all train to fight with each mission getting progressively more dangerous yet every time you rescue some poor soul my heart almost bursts with pride. I just wanted to do something for the person who means so much to us all.”

“It’s ok Emma but you need to let me do my job, if a lot of people jumped out and shouted ‘surprise’ at those two then you would have a body count. They need to know and we need to plan, if Voldemort sends anyone we need to be prepared so the right people end up going home at the end of the night.”

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Lavender Brown’s plans for them to be the most beautiful girls at the party died before they even got past security on the dock, the most

stunning woman she had ever seen walked over to where the Weasley twins were currently being pinned to the wall while more and more contraband was removed from their person by the American aurors. Walk seemed the wrong word for this beauty's form of locomotion as every muscle in her body appeared toned to perfection while working in absolute harmony with its neighbour, she was poetry in motion. Her black form fitting dress was trimmed with red and matched perfectly by her jet black hair with red highlights.

She got Fred and George released though all their pranks were confiscated but whatever she said to the twins rendered them ghostly white and speechless as all they could do was nod in agreement, clearly this woman was not to be messed with.

A further shock awaited Miss Brown when they finally got aboard and waked down the staircase only to bump into a gorgeous Hannah Abbot who was draped over an absolute hunk, when the Adonis spoke to her she almost fainted.

"Hi Lavender welcome to New York, so glad you could make it."

She managed to stutter "Neville Longbottom?" before a passing waiter saved her life with a much needed drink.

When she spied Harry on the dance floor with Hermione her glass was suddenly emptied, their movements together were the most sensual thing she'd ever seen a couple perform with clothes on. They glided across the dance floor in perfect harmony seemingly oblivious to the number of people attempting to cut in to the hottest couple here tonight. She and Daphne were used to being the centre of attention but the way things were going they wouldn't even get noticed tonight, her dream of being kissed by the boy-who-lived on his birthday looked like remaining just that – a dream.

Harry's next dance was with his mum, she had worked so hard to make tonight special for him and he would never admit even under torture to wishing that half the people here could be thrown overboard. Minerva had invited the members of their year group who hadn't gone dark or been captured and Harry was never more thankful that he had quit Hogwarts after one year than suffer this lot for another six.

Justin was a pompous arsehole, Seamus already drunk while Lavender looked as if she wanted to rape him in the middle of the dance floor.

It had been cool meeting his old Quidditch team mates again though and having the teams' photo taken with Minerva was one of tonight's highlights. There were a few eyebrows raised when he danced close with the beauty in the black dress and she appeared to spend the whole time whispering in his ear but Nym was keeping him up to date and Hermione was able to pass the information she received through their bond to her dance partner Draco.

The night was going well until the death eaters made their dramatic entrance, they blew the double doors off for effect and positioned themselves on the balcony between the double staircase that led down to the room. The dozen of them now had clear shots at the entire company but were going to use cutting hexes as a dead prize would see them quickly meet the same fate, their leader shouted "Happy Birthday Potter" as they prepared to open fire certain it would be a turkey shoot.

He was proven correct but instead of a screaming and panicking crowd they were faced with the seven members of 'Liberty'.

There clothes had been clever illusion charms that had concealed their uniforms and equipment, they had also planed on being spread out through the hall unlike the death eaters who were bunched together in one mass target. With an automatic pistol in one hand and a wand firing reducto curses in the other the seven members had opened fire even before the crowd had time to react and panic.

The lead death eater was right in his prediction of it being a turkey shoot, he just didn't realise they would be the turkeys with only one spell being cast before they were slaughtered under a hail of devastatingly accurate bullets and curses.

The screaming started but Harry quickly took command, "Silence! Nym contact Jim Brogan to make sure this was the entire group and tell him we have some trash needing taken out, Draco and Susan check we have no one playing possum in that group and I don't need

to tell you to be careful, Neville and Hanna crowd control and don't take any shit off anybody because someone leaked information on this party."

Hermione was already checking two wounded guests when Andi came to help while Harry went straight for mum who was standing gazing in horror at the sight on the mezzanine, he hugged her before speaking, "This is not your fault, they came here to kill and maim and got their arse kicked. I'm sorry you had to see that mum but this is what we do, take out the bad guys as quickly as possible so everyone here gets to see the sun coming up tomorrow."

The ear splitting shriek had Harry spinning to cover Emma with his body while he, along with the rest of the team drew their weapons while searching for targets only to find Lavender staring at Hannah with reverence and awe. "You guys are LIBERTY?"

You could have heard a pin drop as everyone turned to their nearest member and saw the badge on their uniform, "You've heard of us?" Hannah asked.

For answer Lavender hiked her dress up, not to flash her knickers but to display the tattoo of the 'Liberty' emblem she had on her upper thigh. "There's a Liberty chapter at Beauxbatons and most of us here tonight are members, you guys give us hope that things can get better but we've got to keep it a secret as even mentioning your name in Britain could get us arrested."

Quite a few people were staring at their unknown heroes and nodding, some now displaying 'Liberty' tattoos of their own.

Harry was staring at the girl still holding up her dress showing her tattoo and red thong panties, "Well there's something I never thought I would see," he was just about to get a clip round the ear from Emma when he finished his statement, "Lavender Brown being able to keep a secret."

There was a pause before the giggling started and pretty soon there was full-blown laughter not so much at the joke but in celebration that they were still alive while the bad guys lay not breathing.

Nym and Hermione approached Harry as the American aurors started removing the bodies, "There were two left outside to observe and keep their escape route open, Jim's guys dealt with them, they apparated from a small boat inside the wards we erected. They now know where we are so it's time to put our plans into operation."

Emma and Dan weren't happy about this but Harry was brutal, "Look mum we tried to live our lives but they came after us, New York is blown and we have to move you out of here."

Dan was going over the same old argument, "We don't mind the moving its being shepherded somewhere safe while you lot go and fight that I object to."

Hermione tried a different tact, "You two, Minerva, Cissi, Augusta, Andi and Ted are our family, we can't be worrying about you when we need all our attention to protect each other. We're about as ready as we'll ever be and news that we're 'Liberty' will be all over Britain within a week, we can use some of that momentum to help us deal with these creeps."

Dan hugged his daughter, "I just feel like I'm the one supposed to be doing the protecting, not hiding out in Australia. You guys were awesome there and so quick you saved a lot of lives tonight."

Nym saw the decision had been made, "Ok we start to pull out tomorrow, get our folks to safety then see about giving Voldemort a bloody nose."

Jim Brogan had a trauma team on standby but most of the British magical world were now getting used to the sight of violent death and the fact the bad guys were on the receiving end was an unusual bonus. The two wounded were quickly healed and the band played on, the waiters were quickly obliviated as the damage was magically repaired so nobody would be any the wiser.

-oOoOo-

Hermione's prediction proved remarkably accurate, within a week the country knew Harry Potter was the leader of Liberty and, like a seed, hope began to grow in those seeking the light. The story also grew with each telling and soon the-boy-who-lived was at the head of an invincible army who were getting ready to take back the country.

The smarter ones with darkness in their soul had a different problem, Liberty took no prisoners and they were now aware who headed that organisation. The worm of doubt began burrowing into their psyche and for the first time in years it wasn't only the oppressed that were trying to flee the country as Voldemort's organisation began haemorrhaging followers as their sense of self-preservation kicked in. As yet not one death eater had encountered Liberty and lived to tell the tale, those were horrible odds to bet your life on.

A/N Thanks for reading.

Chapter 10

Friday 8th August 1997

The people in Diagon Alley all stopped what they were doing to stare at the young couple who had just left Gringotts and were slowly making their way along the alley, had there been any muggle borns present they wouldn't have needed Ennio Morricone's soundtrack or rolling tumbleweeds to recognise a Clint Eastwood spaghetti western when they saw one. Just like in the movies the public all stood back and waited to see what was going to happen next while at the same time making sure they had something to hide behind when death came a' calling.

It was the fact that they weren't strutting like the pureblood peacocks or trying to be invisible like the rest of them that drew your attention, here was a couple who strolled down the centre of the alley as if they had a perfect right to do so and appeared ready to defend that right in an instant.

A very recognisable voice was being broadcast into the couples right ears, "Ok guys, we got you covered, Hermione you take care of your husband's cute arse for me. Draco and Susan be careful and get the hell out of Dodge if Voldemort makes an appearance."

"Hey cuz, don't I have a cute arse?" Draco asked.

Susan butted in, "Yes you do and don't worry because I'm watching it for you."

"Oh great, does that mean that I'm the only guy that doesn't have a cute butt?" bemoaned Neville.

Hanna's answer was again heard by all seven of them, "Nev you've got a great butt honey but I can't think about that and concentrate where my bullets are supposed to go at the same time."

Nym was smiling at their usual banter before a mission kicked off and even though this was their biggest to date she was pleased that they were still relaxed enough to joke around.

All that changed when Harry's voice came over their earpieces, "Aw shit, SNAFU. Hermione's about to pull a wicked witch on us and somebody's going to feel as if a house just dropped on them."

Nym spied what he was talking about, "Ok the situation is unavoidable but why did the dipstick have to pick today to make an appearance? Draco you and Susan are going to have to use your best judgement as the plan just went AWOL."

Hermione had never been so angry, walking towards them was the unmistakeable figure of Ron Weasley but it was the two partially clothed, collar wearing teenage girls who he was pulling along behind him that had her temper at previously unrecorded levels.

The arrogance in this arsehole's manner as he strolled towards them screamed confidence in a system that informed the world that he was among the elite of British wizarding and everything was his for the taking.

Ron's eyes were wide with surprise at who was walking towards him and just how bloody hot Hermione looked, "Well if it isn't my former friends, long time no see but then a lot has changed since we last met."

The sneer on his face was pure evil and the authority contained in his voiced command brokered no argument, "I'm evoking pureblood law so you mudblood can get down on your knees and attend to my needs now, the half blood can have the pleasure of watching."

Hermione licked her lips and used a breathless tone of voice that was dripping with sarcasm, "Oh Ronald you have such a masterful way with words and are just about to make this girl's dreams come true, I'm so glad you're allowing Harry to watch."

The fact that he might be in extreme danger never entered Ron's tiny mind as he stood proudly with an expectant smile on his face, his

revenge would be sweeter than anything he could have imagined. The three soft pops couldn't have been heard more than six feet away but the redhead's horrific screams reverberated the entire length of the alley.

Ron's eyes were now even wider but this time in terror as both hands held tightly to the bleeding mess that was once his groin, "How was it for you Ronald? I'm so glad you chose me to be your last, now if you can manage not to lose too much blood you may just survive though thankfully no woman will ever have to be troubled by you again."

Hermione's microphone had picked up and broadcast every word Ron uttered so it was no surprise when Nym's voice came through loud and clear, "You go girl! Shoot the bastard one more time for me."

A stunned Draco could be heard over their earpieces, "Did Hermione just shoot Ron Weasley's wedding tackle off and I missed it?"

It was a slightly shaken Harry who replied, "Trust me on this one guys, not a sight you ever want to see."

Ron was now whining and crying on the ground when Hermione turned her attention to the two girls, "Get those collars off now! No one should ever have to be subservient to a shithead like this."

Hermione got no arguments from either girl and the younger one actually threw it at Ron before regaining some courage and kicked the crying pureblood, this appeared to be a brilliant idea to her fellow slave who couldn't wait to join in the fun.

"Two bad guys inbound from your right," was broadcast as the Potters turned to face what now passed for aurors in Britain, NEWT's were no longer an employee requirement but the dark mark was.

Before the aurors got too close the cry of 'Liberty' and 'Potter' was heard from the crowd as the couple had been recognised, the two death eaters by another name turned and attempted to flee but just about everyone present who carried a wand fired a spell at them as the ordinary witches and wizards of Britain began to fight back.

The crowd fell upon them kicking and punching both to death with Ron Weasley quickly meeting the same fate, four other unfortunate purebloods who were 'walking their pets' in the alley were slaughtered where they stood with the girls being set free.

"Well that was unexpected," voiced Nym with the understatement of the year. "Draco and Susan, things should be getting pretty hectic your end any time soon but it's still your call. You do not have permission to get yourselves injured so don't go upsetting me."

Things were getting hectic in the alley as the potters were being mobbed with well wishers and Nym was beginning to get worried, "Harry we may have to pull out, at the moment we can't protect you because there are a lot of innocent people crowding around you both."

Draco cut in, "Panic button being pressed here, this place is emptying quicker than Nev's pockets on poker night so expect imminent large contingent of incoming bad guys."

Harry answered back, "Nym we can't back out now, this is snowballing and my gut is telling me to go with it."

"Your gut is telling you never to let your wife do the cooking ever again, Sophie can sure pick the times to go into labour. Ok Harry your call but would recommend taking command of the situation down there immediately or we could have a bloodbath on our hands, these bastards will shoot at anything and at the moment your presenting them with a pretty big target."

Harry fired a cannon blast from his wand to get there attention, "Listen carefully because we don't have much time, here's what I want you to do."

-oOoOo-

Draco watched as panic reigned with the news that Diagon Alley was under attack with spell use off the scale, when a terrified pureblood floo'd confirmation that it was Potter then a flock of headless chickens would have been better organised.

“Ok love, now it’s our turn.” Draco and Susan were putting there goblin stealth training to good use as they ghosted through the ministry towards their target, with the addition of the American aurors communications system combined with the required silencing bubble over their mouths then they were invisible and silent while still being able to talk and listen to the entire group.

They reached their destination just as a worried looking wizard came barging out the room clutching a piece of parchment, Susan was able to jam her foot in the closing door as they started removing equipment from their belts. Neither liked this part as the people in this room were probably not murderers but they relentlessly pointed the people who were towards their targets, this is what had cost Aunt Amelia her eye and was capturing every young muggle born in the country, Susan was determined that after today no one else would get caught in their web.

It was basic, it was brutal, it was devastatingly effective as they pushed open the door, chucked in a couple of bombs before closing and sealing the exit then running like the clappers down the corridor before the ‘whump’ was felt throughout the entire ministry building.

Draco and Susan made it out the building mere meters in front of the rolling dust cloud that would have highlighted the invisible duo as effectively as New York neon.

The bombs had been especially designed and built by the Americans for this specific task and worked on two levels, the first was obvious in that the contents and occupants would be rendered into paste. The second level though had sent a massive pulse out over the net destroying ever magical sensor in the British Isles, Liberty had just taken away Voldemort’s biggest weapon and left him blind to any magic being performed in the country.

-oOoOo-

The Potter’s watched as about thirty of Voldemort’s aurors made their way slowly down the alley towards the lone couple, they all heard Susan proclaim “Elvis has left the building!” which should have been

the signal for them to pull out and celebrate the complete success of their most daring mission to date. Draw people away from the ministry then blow the magical net to smithereens looked a good plan on paper but that had went to hell in a handbasket as soon as the wizarding public had joined in, should they withdraw now then those people would be publicly tortured to death as a warning to others. They heard Nym scream at Draco and Susan to get their arses to Gringotts as they needed back-up but the Potters never took their eyes off the approaching enemy. Nym, Hannah and Neville were on the rooftops, invisible and armed with rifles which they had just stripped the noise suppression from after switching to hollow point ammunition, they were hoping the unaccustomed attack would shock a few of them into running and they were now aiming at head shots for the same reason. They wanted to loosen their resolve as well as their bowels, if they were determined to get to Harry and Hermione they were going to have to earn it.

The attackers were now approaching wand range when three who were in the lead had the back of their heads violently explode outwards showering those behind with bits of their brains, the sound of the gunshots was like a clap of thunder in the shocked silence before three more repeated the feat and then pandemonium ensued as the ordinary wizarding folk opened fire from under cover of their hastily found hiding places at either side of the bad guys. Draco and Susan raced to join their friends but the four were reduced to spectators watching the carnage as years of repression was vented on their oppressors while the rifles of Liberty quashed any pockets of resistance and picked off escape attempts.

Cheering from the crowd indicated the slaughter was over as the other three Liberty members made their way down from their perch's and joined in a group hug of relief, Nym was the one to break the mood, "What the bloody hell do we do now?"

Harry reached into his breast pocket.

-oOoOo-

Amelia and Jim were pacing up and down her office at Torch camp enduring the hardest job in the world, waiting on the phone to ring.

Torch camp had been set up over a year ago for witches and wizards who had fled or been rescued from Britain and now wanted to fight back, they had fifty-seven people currently training under Amelia and Remus with assistance from their American cousins.

She made a dive for the phone and had it on speaker before the second ring, "Hi Amelia, mission accomplished and everyone safe."

Harry could feel her relief on the other side of the Atlantic, "How soon can you get your people suited, booted and in Britain?"

Amelia looked towards Jim who just shrugged, it wasn't something they'd gone over yet. "We could probably get there in a couple of days."

"We march on the ministry in thirty minutes so that's how long you've got to get to Gringotts, be here with who ever you can lay your hands on or we leave without you."

Amelia hit a button on her desk starting a klaxon going as she picked up the microphone "This is not a drill, we're going to London to take our ministry back NOW!"

-oOoOo-

The Albus Dumbledore who sat in the crofter's cottage deep in the great glen of Scotland was not the same man who'd been sacked from Hogwarts, his long hair and beard went the same road as his vanity never to return. His chin now sported a small goatee while his hair didn't reach his shoulders that were adorned with a brown work robe but this was not what would draw your attention to the old wizard, it was his stillness as he focused on the package placed on the table in front of him.

He'd spent the last two hours going over the information he had before him and kept arriving at the same conclusion, this was not a trap but a genuine offer.

The note had the old wizard almost dancing for joy but he'd stayed alive this long by being cautious and that's exactly the way he intended to continue.

The carrier of this note is very precious to me as she was a birthday gift from my first friend who had a heart bigger than anyone I've ever meet. The package she delivered has a purpose that will become apparent shortly and require you to speak my name at the appropriate time.

One glance at the snowy owl that was now sharing a perch with Fawkes and Albus needed no further confirmation that this was Hedwig, beloved familiar of one Harry Potter and a birthday gift from their large friend Hagrid.

Harry must be in the country because he would never risk Hedwig any other way, the package began to vibrate so Albus removed it from the envelope and after saying 'Harry Potter' watched as a young mans face appeared in the mirror. He was older and no glasses but still undoubtedly Harry.

"Hello sir, nice to see you again."

"Harry my boy you're looking well, how have you been?"

"Sorry sir but this isn't a social call, more of a request. Me and a bunch of others plan on taking a stroll down to the ministry and inviting them to recognise Amelia Bones as the new minister for magic, we wondered if you'd care to join us having fought the good fight for the last five years."

Dumbledore's head was spinning; did he have one too many lemon drops? "What if they don't like the idea and just where are you?" "We intend to make them an offer they can't refuse sir and I'm currently standing in the middle of Diagon Alley."

Albus had forgotten that when dealing with Harry the norms do not apply, first time on a broom and he becomes the youngest ever Hogwarts seeker. "Harry I have a request of my own, I want Snape! I now realise the man should have died sixteen years ago so I intend

to rectify my mistake with extreme prejudice and reduce that abomination he calls a school to rubble.”

Harry couldn't hide the grin, “You have my permission, support and anything else you might need, just remember to bring Hedwig with you to the alley as that is one lady you don't want to upset.”

Albus had no sooner put the mirror in his pocket than the snowy owl was landing on his shoulder, there was no way she was being left behind.

-oOoOo-

Tom/Voldemort was reading the parchment that had just been delivered by a very nervous follower, the news that Diagon Alley was under attack by none other than Harry Potter didn't make any sense. His thoughts were cut short as a shudder running through the ministry building and an enormous pulse of energy provided his answer, the fools had probably sent everyone they could after Potter's ghost while he attacked his real target.

Voldemort ranted and raved while Tom quietly congratulated Potter on being a worthwhile adversary and wished for the millionth time he'd never attempted to rejoin his soul.

His reasoning at the time was sound, according to his only source of information, the Weasley girl, Harry was this great hero who had defeated him as a baby and then again at the end of his first year in Hogwarts. It was only the boy marrying another that allowed him to take control of the young witch and his first act had been to destroy that precious jumper, had she actually met and spoken to Potter then he was unsure if he would have managed to absorb her life force such was her devotion to her hero. He badly needed that information but got more than he bargained for, he now knew he couldn't physically touch the boy and later heard the complete prophesy in the department of mysteries stating that Potter could actually kill him. With no news for the last five years he had no idea what power his nemesis might actually possess.

The soul joining had proceeded perfectly except for the fact that Voldemort was unfortunately quite insane, being destroyed for the second time by Potter had pushed him over the edge of what was normal even for a megalomaniac. They were currently in control of magical Britain with their every whim being catered for and most of the population totally unaware who pulled the strings, Voldemort wanted to have the fountain in the foyer replaced with a grand throne constructed from skulls where he would sit every day and be worshiped. Tom had no qualms about killing, he'd murdered his father and grandparents to make the diary but pointless killing just robbed you of a resource you could no longer exploit. Voldemort was so filled with hate he wanted to torture and kill the entire world's population, leaving him to rule over the desolation he'd wrought.

Their continual battles over the same body was taking its toll though as, instead of twenty-two they now looked nearer forty than thirty. Yes he received valuable information from the joining but paid a very high price, Tom had to keep all his emotions clamped down tight or that gave Voldemort the toehold he needed to begin their next battle for dominance.

The next piece of parchment delivered started a battle that Tom knew he had to win, Voldemort would stand and fight but this would only add impetus to their enemy's endeavours and they would be destroyed.

Harry Potter and Albus Dumbledore were marching towards the ministry at the head of an army after slaughtering the people they sent to the Alley, he had assumed that attack was a feint to allow him access to his actual target but now they faced real danger. The smart thing to do would be to withdraw and regroup but he could already feel Voldemort's response, he would stand at the top of the ministry steps and demand they all kneel before the greatest wizard who ever lived. As red began to creep into his eyes Tom knew he was in a fight for his life before Potter even got here.

-oOoOo-

Amelia and Remus led their people out of Gringotts and straight into a scene from Dante's Inferno, bodies were hanging from every structure tall enough to support one.

She saw the Liberty group standing to the side and headed straight for them, "Harry what the hell is going on here? We must put a stop to this at once."

"Amelia, they came here to commit murder and instead discovered that choosing the wrong side can cost your life. Those bodies are already dead and the people putting them up there might not see supper tonight as we're marching on the ministry so leave them alone."

Amelia was astonished by this, "These people have no training and could get themselves killed, this is not their fight."

An angry Hermione was on her in a flash, "You are so wrong, this is their fight and they're ready to die for what they believe in. Freedom isn't a right that's just handed out like a chocolate frog card its got to be earned and for the first time ever the magical population of Britain is saying they've had enough. The ordinary wizarding folk are sick of changing one greedy bigoted bastard for another one while the only option left to those not considered worthy is to sneak out the country or become a slave to the ever-worsening system. Today a pureblood demanded that I, Lady Potter-Black get down on my knees and service him in the middle of the alley, I would rather die than submit to a system where the law declares I must comply with his wishes. I may die today but I will die free, fighting hard so my friends and family can have a better life. These bastards cut out your eye Amelia and have committed atrocities too numerous to mention. If you don't have the stomach for this then perhaps we need another leader as I have no wish for my children's generation to go through this oppression again because we didn't deal with the problem when we had the chance."

Amelia, wand in hand placed her clenched fist over the Liberty emblem on her uniform, "I Amelia Bones promise to hunt these people down and ensure their punishment matches their crimes, if

they have stolen they will pay dearly, if they have murdered, raped or tortured they will be publicly executed.”

There was a massive cheer as neither witch had realised their raised voices had drawn an audience, the audience stretched far further than the confines of the alley with the WWN, sensing a change in government and the story of the century started broadcasting these events live and picked up all of their arguments which entered every wizarding home and had listeners heading for the alley. This brought Liberty reinforcements with the added bonus of emptying the ministry of anyone who didn't want to fight and the guilty could be tracked down later.

It was into this melee that Fawkes flamed Albus with Hedwig on his shoulder, the snowy owl flew immediately to Harry and took her rightful position on his right shoulder.

“Good to see you again Harry, quite the party you're throwing here.”

‘Thank you sir, the decorations are not to everyone's taste but a necessary reminder of what happens when, by our inactions we let a few oppress the many.’

The sudden hush alerted them both that something was happening and as they turned the sight of Griphook and Ragnok in full goblin battle dress leading a hundred of their elite troops towards them left a lot of people unsure of what exactly was going on here.

Ragnok tried to bow to Harry but he was having none of it and gripped his arm in the grasp of goblin brother/warrior, the goblin leader held his head high and made his proclamation.

“The goblin nation stands firmly behind Lord Potter-Black on this venture.”

“Lord Potter-Black graciously refuses and instead offers the spot by my left side, Lady Potter-Black always fights at my right or you would be there my most trusted friends.”

“On behalf of my nation I humbly accept.”

Harry had the man in a bear hug before moving onto Griphook while the rest of Liberty greeted both goblins just as warmly, the crowd was stunned to silence watching this and some of the team shouting over greetings to goblins they recognised in the troops.

Harry saw this reaction and decided it was time for a few home truths, knowing full well the whole thing was being broadcast on WWN. "The goblins have looked after me and my family since I was eleven, they got me out the country and into a location where we were safe from Voldemort and able to train for this day. They provided the help that got most of the vulnerable off to other schools and even their families away from Britain. They arranged our training thus allowing us to form Liberty and provided us with the information to save as many as we could. I publicly apologise to anyone listening if you needed us and we weren't there but we're here now and here to stay, there is no one Liberty trusts more than our goblin brothers and I am delighted to have these noble warriors fight by my side as we take back our country from those not fit to rule. For the last five years the goblins have frustrated our enemies while helping us every way they could and all they have ever asked for in return is the hand of friendship, they have mine and that of every member of Liberty unconditionally."

A fierce roar came from the massed troop of goblins as they clattered their swords and axes off their shields in a display of gratitude that terrified those present in the alley and they were the good guys, the bad guys would be shitting themselves.

Harry could see he had the momentum so reached for the brass ring, "A centaur saved me from Voldemort in the forbidden forest, my first magical friend was a half giant and the nearest thing I have to an uncle is a werewolf yet every one of these is classed as a dangerous creature by the very people who led others around like animals. We have a chance today to make history and create a country where we all live free from persecution regardless of race, creed, colour or heritage. When our grandchildren ask us what we did on this day you can hold your head up high and say we fought side by side to achieve the most important thing in the world, FREEDOM!"

Any windows in the alley that survived the battle succumbed to the tumultuous roar of approval that followed Harry's speech, it probably reached as far as the ministry.

There plan was simplicity itself, it had to be with so many untrained people there. Griphook and the goblins would take the left flank, Remus and the trainees from torch the right. Harry, Hermione, Ragnok, Amelia and Albus were in the centre with all the witches and wizards following on behind the three groups. Their ranks were swelling by the minute so Harry was keen to get moving as they were beginning to get crushed by sheer numbers, their army was over two thousand strong as they set off towards their goal.

Susan and Draco had point along with six of their goblin tutors to make sure the route held no nasty surprises for them while Nym, Nev and Hannah had all disillusioned themselves and flown ahead to find placements to provide covering fire.

When a muggle born began playing the bagpipes he'd brought and the goblins used their shields like drums, beating them with their weapons in time to the music Harry couldn't help but feel his blood stir, his thoughts turned to their family and a certain Celt who would have loved this only now remembering that they hadn't phoned home. Shit, even when they won today they were going to get a rollicking from their worried family.

-oOoOo-

Over ten thousand miles away in Sydney, Australia a group of people sat huddled around the wizarding radio, WWN London knew the interest in these developments would be worldwide and had immediately offered the live feed to their wizarding network associates who almost bit their hand off in their haste to accept. The result was the events in London being broadcast live throughout the entire wizarding world.

When they didn't get a phone call to tell them that everything was all right their nerves got more frayed the longer the blasted thing didn't ring, Ted had put the wizarding wireless on because an attack on the British ministry was sure to be mentioned on the news at some point.

Everybody started talking at once when the news started coming through from London before quickly realising that they couldn't hear the radio and promptly shut-up.

When Dan heard what that pureblood had tried to do to his daughter his blood pressure hit the roof as he wanted to tear the bastard limb from limb, knowing what Liberty was capable of and the fact Hermione was talking about it probably meant the prick wasn't breathing anymore and he had no problems with that.

As Hermione mentioned fighting for her family and wanting her children to grow up free of this oppression every woman in the room as well as Dobby were crying their eyes out, Amelia's promise of justice was expected and well received.

Minerva had a smile on her face as Albus joined them for the battle, her old friend had finally come to his senses and was ready to fight side-by-side with Harry against the real enemy. When the news that a hundred goblin warriors had joined their side for the battle was announced everyone breathed a huge sigh of relief, all had witnessed the goblins training the group and Dan had even taken part in some of it so they knew the odds had just swung heavily in their favour.

They were aware the groups original intention was for their usual in-and-out strike but the commentators description of what happened had trapped them into either abandoning the people who fought back or taking the fight to the ministry, they all were aware that was a decision that was only going to go one way with Harry involved.

Dan had reached for the brandy with everyone having at least one tonight, when Harry gave his 'freedom' speech they were on their feet toasting the wizard they all loved. After five years living together it was more like a communal family with everybody bringing something to the table, losing even one of those young people would be a devastating blow heartfelt by all.

None of the boys or Susan had a father so Dan and Ted had become the unofficial fathers of the group, Emma, Cissi and Andi the mothers, Amelia and Minerva as the great aunts while Augusta was everyone's grandmother. It was Nym's role that was pivotal though, as big sis

she kept the younger ones in line while was their strongest protector from the adults if they thought they were overstepping some mark. She was scarily protective of the group and with her and Harry there the pureblood who'd accosted Hermione was sure to have met a quick but painful end.

Sitting listening live while your family went into battle was a horrendous thing to bear and not even the brandy could take the edge off that. Listening to the commentator's description of how Hermione and Harry with Hedwig on his shoulder were leading the revolution filled them to bursting point with pride but when the bagpipes started playing Minerva broke down and expressed the deepest wishes of everyone in that room, "I should be there!"

A/N thanks for reading

Chapter 11

Using her telescopic sights Nym scanned every face in the small crowd for the third time, they were all waiting nervously atop the ministry steps and yet again Nym drew a blank from her concealed rooftop perch, "Voldemort not present, repeat Voldemort not present. Estimate force of one hundred and fifty to sixty waiting at the entrance to the ministry building though cannot discount reinforcements held elsewhere."

Neville's voice was next to be heard, "Confirm Nym's estimated count and lack of Voldemort, no Snape or the LeStrange bitch either. This is the brave or the brainless that think they're going to smack our wrists and we're all going to toddle off back home and forget about this. Definite ID on minister who's standing right at the front ready to take house points and give us detention."

Draco was next to report, "We have checked all surrounding buildings and they're clear, only place left for reinforcements to be concealed is the ministry building. Kind of wondering if we haven't shot ourselves in the foot here by destroying the magical net then re-taking the ministry."

Hermione was in no doubts, "No Draco, you and Susan did this country a great service. While purebloods hid behind their wards practicing whatever spells they wanted the ordinary wizarding folk were controlled by this means, I would still have wanted that destroyed even if we did re-take the ministry. If Voldemort has fled there are only a few places he could hide and we can be on top of them before they even realise it."

"We have a problem Harry," came from Hannah "This is not death eaters we're facing here but clerks, secretaries, janitors and a few old codgers. I'll put a bullet in anyone who lifts a wand against us before they can blink but this is wrong, these people have been flung out here to die. You need to try and talk them out of it even if we have to take out the ringleaders."

"Copy that Hannah, will do our best. ETA two minutes." He didn't think Voldemort and his followers would have the stomach for a fight,

each of them had studied the drawing of him received from the elves so they could be confident he wasn't there. Twenty to one odds against was not something a smart man risked his troops with and their force had grown to over three thousand.

Draco's voice came back over their earpieces, "Guys, some of these people are actually crying and I just saw one throw-up, these are not death eaters but will we be able to keep the crowd off them?"

They could now see what awaited them at the top of the ministry stairs and Harry had to agree with his team's assessment, he would have to pull something out the bag or these people would be ripped to pieces. "Will try to get them to disarm but then Amelia takes over, may need a show of strength to back her up."

They all voiced an acknowledgement back as Harry prepared to talk to the ministry force but Umbridge beat him to it, "This is an illegal gathering, desist and return to your homes before the full might of the ministry is brought to bear on you."

Harry was astonished, this woman was either incredibly stupid or had the biggest set of Cojones on the planet, "Excuse me bitch but we're not here to listen to any of your bullshit, the ministry is here to serve the magical population of Britain and not the other way around. As of now Britain is under martial law until we can hold fair elections and your only decision here today is whether to drop your wand and stand aside or die. I promise only the guilty will be punished."

An old man in expensive robes strode forward, "Only the Wizengamot can dissolve the government and I, Benjamin Julius Dover the Third as head of that illustrious body block these actions. You sir are nothing but a half blood upstart with no regard for his betters and no authority to carry out those actions."

The arrogance of this bastard was beyond belief, did the old coot think only Kryptonite could kill him?

"While you are technically correct I'm afraid your information is out of date, by the power vested in us by this magical army you can see behind me we just dissolved the Wizengamot as well. There will be

an elected magical council whose first job will be to change this country's laws and outlaw discrimination."

The loud cheering behind him gave Harry time to think and his temper started to surface, "You're the bastard that passed the pureblood law putting my wife at the mercy of those arseholes, I, Lord Potter-Black challenge you to a duel!"

"As head of the Wizengamot you cannot challenge me, I am above the law."

Harry was boiling over but Nym's voice in his ear was ice cold, "This arsehole would have me and Hermione on our knees searching through his robes trying to find his tiny dick, Ben Dover needs some lead in his pencil and I'm just the girl to do it."

Harry nodded and passed Hedwig over to Hermione before he held up his right arm, there was silence until he snapped his fingers and the former head of the Wizengamot received his dismissal notice in the shape of a rifle bullet between the eyes.

Harry's voice carried clear menace, "Can anyone tell how pure his blood is now it's running down the steps? In three seconds anyone who hasn't dropped their wand and stepped to the left will find their blood mixing with his, not a course of action I would recommend. I will count to three, one..."

There was no need for the count to go any higher as wands were thrown away in the mad dash to get left and out of the firing line, for an instant it appeared as if Umbridge wasn't going to comply but the hopelessness of the situation finally permeated even her thick skull.

Harry strode up the steps as Remus and Griphook sent some of their troops to corral the prisoners while directing the rest to control the crowd should they turn bloodthirsty.

The crowd quietened expectantly awaiting Harry's words, "We have achieved much here today but this is not the end, merely the first chapter in the new history of the British magical world." This was greeted with loud cheering but Harry continued after it died down,

“Behind me is the building that should be the beating heart of our community instead it has been poisoned by blood issues that pumped bigotry, greed and self interests through every artery of our society. Today we have cleansed that heart by removing the disease but we must have a transfusion of new blood, ideas, laws and leadership to take us forward into the next century. Please welcome our interim minister of magic and Liberty’s recommendation for the full time post Madam Amelia Bones.”

There was cheering but as Amelia was led up the steps by Hermione, Albus and Ragnok she knew there was an undercurrent here that wanted Harry for the job, she herself would be more than happy to serve under him but was well aware that was not what he wanted. Draco, Susan, Nym, Neville and Hannah all appeared beside Harry, Hermione, Albus and Ragnok behind her in a show of support as Amelia tried to establish her own credentials with the crowd.

“Magical users of Britain it is a great honour for me to stand here today in front of you with the recommendations of Liberty ringing in my ears, I would feel privileged to serve under any of them having watched their training for five years and fought by their side in order to bring freedom to our country. Unfortunately they have some unfinished business to attend to before taking a well earned rest so this task is going to be left to us but I think if we work together we’re more than capable of giving these seven heroes a country to be proud of.”

The crowd were warming to her now and the applause was louder this time.

“It took having my eye cut out by the Lestrage brothers while on a mission to focus my remaining sight on what the problem was, unfortunately the problem was us! Me, you, the person standing next to you all decided to do nothing and let a few thugs take over our country, we did nothing as our neighbours were led away for some perceived crime and stood watching as they paraded their human pets along our streets. It took the actions of these magnificent seven people behind me to open our eyes, give us hope and courage to yell ‘no more’ with the resolve to do something about it. Today I stand here looking at thousands of magical users who made that same

decision and know our country will never again tolerate leaders who think they can pillage, plunder and rape with impunity.”

Amelia wished she had a glass of water when a ministry house elf appeared with one, her ‘thank you my friend’ didn’t go unnoticed by the crowd before she continued.

“The Lestrangle brothers paid the ultimate price for their attack and died that night when Liberty struck the first blow for freedom. Part of me knows how you must feel and wants to rip everyone who chose the wrong side to pieces but that would be wrong and I will tell you why, not everyone went along willingly with what was transpiring and at great personal risk to themselves and their families passed vital information to us allowing vulnerable people to be spirited out the country. Some of the troops you see before you resulted from these raids and I would ask that you show restraint as we gather up these people and give them trials, never again will killers be allowed to walk free from prison due to the government changing and welcoming these thugs back with open arms because committing murder will now carry the death sentence.”

This brought a loud cheer from the crowd, they wanted to see the guilty punished.

“A mixed force of goblin and Liberty troops will be visiting every camp in the country today and I would ask any healers here now to volunteer their services to aid the victims, rest assured the animals running these camps will not need healing but burying.”

Amelia was on a roll now but sensed it was time to wrap up, “I want you to leave here today not only with the knowledge that you participated in something so profound as to go down in history but also my pledge that we will have a ministry, a magical council and a school operating before Halloween.”

The cheering was the loudest yet before the crowd began to disperse, each pretending to be disappointed there wasn’t a battle while secretly delighted at the outcome. By sheer numbers they were always going to win but a victory with zero casualties on their side

appeared to be Liberty's modus operandi which was one hell of an incentive to choose their side in any confrontation.

Back on the steps Amelia was being congratulated before Albus spoke, "You do realise that was being broadcast on WWN, any bad guys in those camps will be long gone before we get anywhere near them."

The new minister just smiled, "I know, we haven't lost anyone today and that's the way I want to keep it. You've seen first hand the way we operate and bringing everyone home safe is our number one priority, these people won't stand and fight but will hide and we'll find them so they'll face justice. Meanwhile we get everyone out of those abominations and start some rehabilitation; Harry is allowing us to take them to the former Malfoy manor to recover so we will hopefully have some unemployed non-pureblood healers in the crowd we can use. The standards at St Mungo's fell to those of the ministry with their purebloods only hiring policy. Albus I would like you to head the new wizarding council and for Ragnok to have a goblin member on it as well."

Both nodded their agreement before Harry spoke, "Now comes the really hard part."

"I know," said Nym "Checking the ministry is actually empty."

"No," answered Hermione "We forgot to phone our parents and say we were Ok, we need someone who's really smooth but sneaky for this."

Six pairs of eyes focused on Draco, "Aw shit guys, why me? I had to phone that time you all got drunk at the U2 concert and again..." he suddenly realised they were not alone as Amelia, Albus and Ragnok burst out laughing.

-oOoOo-

In Sydney the room was full of cheers and tears as they listened while the ministry was taken with only one shot being fired, the speeches were liberally toasted with brandy so by the time an

apprehensive Draco actually phoned the occupants were feeling no pain.

Dan shouted that they wanted to come to Britain before being embarrassingly reminded that their emergency portkeys that everyone wore were now keyed to Potter Manor.

Hermione told them that they would meet up there later as they still had a job to do.

-oOoOo-

Liberty ghosted through the ministry floor by floor, using infra-red sensors they had already caught one person trying to hide with an invisibility cloak who was stunned and portkeyed to the waiting team in the lobby.

They had been systematically searching for nearly an hour when they hit pay dirt, the large room was heavily shielded against magical sensors but their magically enhanced infra-red showed one person lying by the large double doors, about another fifteen on their knees in front of a seated person. Liberty couldn't understand why they were still there but since, according to their map this was the room where Voldemort supposedly held court they quickly made the decision to take the entire room out, splitting into two teams they silently went to work.

Edmund Parkinson had been silently cursing the day he took the dark mark for over three hours, that's how long they'd been left kneeling in silence before the dark lord.

They'd been summoned just after he'd heard on the wizarding wireless that Potter and Liberty were in Diagon Alley yet they'd spent all that time kneeling watching their leader appear to wage a war with himself over what to do next. They were stupidly kneeling in silence while the WWN was broadcasting all the information they needed on Potter which didn't make sense to Edmund. The tension had eventually got to Snape who'd made a dash for the door only to find himself placed under the cruciatus until unconscious, he lay there still and so far that had been the only word spoken by their lord.

He had noticed the eyes cycling between red and blue but when blood started dripping from Voldemort's nostrils and he made no movement to staunch the flow Edmund Parkinson knew they were in deep trouble.

His fears were later confirmed as the room exploded around them.

The teams had left the doors alone and moved into the adjacent rooms, cone shaped charges with built-in shields that forced the blast in the direction you wanted were placed along the shared walls. Susan was their explosives expert and in this situation you would have more chance of convincing a dragon to use mouthwash than getting the trigger out of her hands.

The other six got ready as Susan counted down, "3..2..1..go!"

Two large portions of wall, six feet high and about twenty feet across, were shattered and blasted at supersonic speeds into the room slicing the occupants to ribbons.

Not yet satisfied the other six lobbed concussion grenades through the openings they had created, waiting on the explosions before each member of Liberty entered with a pistol in one hand and wand in the other, Harry headed immediately in the direction of the person who'd been sitting on the chair to find a bleeding and broken body with glowing red eyes. Voldemort was obviously trying to say something but all that was passing his lips was bright red bubbles, Harry aimed his pistol and shot the murder of his parents in the head.

Harry thought it was over until he heard a hated voice shout his name.

Severus Snape didn't need to believe in divination to know his life would be over if he was captured, his treatment of non-pureblood students at his school would see him marked for execution. He'd been listening to the descriptions of the bodies being displayed in the alley when his dark mark had flared and had seriously considered just running, only his belief that Potter would never amount to much ensuring the dark lord's victory made him attend.

After kneeling for almost two hours his nerve broke and he made a dash for the door only to experience pain like he'd never felt before, after regaining consciousness he decided his best course of action was just to lay there pretending he was still knocked out. This proved to be a wise decision as the room exploded covering him in debris but avoiding serious injury, when the people entered the room he recognised the mudblood through the swirling clouds of dust by her hair and she was heading in his direction. A noise made her turn round and his mind was made up, he only had one shot at this.

Harry turned slowly to see the wand of Snape pressed into Hermione's neck, "The mudblood is my ticket out of here, anybody moves and she dies!"

Snape's eyeballs nearly popped out his head when another Hermione walked over and kissed Harry on the cheek, "You always said the greasy bastard was crazy darling and I guess this proves it."

Snape's whole reason for living was concentrated down into how his last act could cause Potter as much pain as possible, he screamed "Sectumsempra" aiming at the witch by Potter's side before his arm exploded in pain from having a black panther trying to chew threw it, his pain was short lived though as his godson put two bullets into his head. Susan's suggestion of staking the bastard just in case he was a vampire was being considered until they noticed Harry kneeling on the ground cradling Nym in his arms.

"Harry I was afraid it might end like this but I don't want you to go blaming yourself, I've loved my time spent living and training with you guys and wouldn't change any of it but I do have one final request – if you and Hermione ever have a daughter please DON'T name her Nymphadora!"

"Eh Nym, your armour took most of the spell. The only injury I can find is a slight cut on your cheek."

"Shut-it Abbot! I've practised this speech for years and this is my last chance to use it, now where was I? Oh yes Harry this is the point where you kiss me goodbye."

Harry bent and kissed the woman who had been the glue that held their group together for the last five years and had just saved his wife's life.

When he was finished he helped the dazed witch to her feet, they were greeted by the sight of a transformed Hermione using her water bottle to try and wash bits of Snape's arm out of her mouth.

"Hermione Potter, you are one lucky witch, I need to find me someone who kisses like that."

Harry pulled his wife into his arms before saying, "No, I'm the lucky one," and proceeded to kiss her senseless.

When she got her breath back Hermione looked deep into her husband's eyes, "It's actually over! This means we can start work on that family we both want."

Harry's eyes were actually glowing until Draco's droll voice interrupted, "Eh guys, I don't think your first born would be too pleased to discover they were conceived amongst the bricks, blood and bodies and to be perfectly honest it's not something I really need to see, save it till we get home then please remember those silencing charms."

The fact that it was finally over and all seven of them were still standing had them laughing at Draco's remarks with sheer relief, Neville had found Bellatrix broken but still breathing before using the same method as Harry to send the bitch on her road to hell, he now stood with his arms round Hannah. A few eyebrows were raised when Harry took his mirror out and handed it to Draco, "Your last call, I promised Dumbledore he could take down Snape so you're going to have to apologise!"

The seven of them left the building still smiling as they prepared to spread the news, it was finally over.

-oOoOo-

It was three days later that the seven walked back up the steps of the ministry in full battle gear, three days in which just how badly the wizarding population had been deceived became public knowledge.

The bodies of Voldemort and his inner circle had been displayed with the full story being told for the first time, realising they'd been duped made them more determined than ever to have a government in place where this could never happen again.

Liberty had spent the last three days with their family at Potter Manor trying to come to terms with the fact that their lives could now return to normal, well as near normal as they would ever be for them after what they had been through and achieved.

Harry and Hermione had postponed starting their family for a few weeks after asking mum to arrange a muggle wedding for them, this had all the females in tears while Susan and Hannah decided they would have a double wedding at Christmas, Draco and Neville were left to just nod in agreement and make sure they turned up.

Everyone had been informed to keep their diaries clear on the thirty first of August as Emma was finding that when you combined magic and money, there was no problem that couldn't be overcome. Her dreams of organising her daughter's wedding were coming true and sending the invitations had her in tears once more.

'Daniel and Emma Granger invite you to share in the love and happiness of the marriage of their daughter Hermione Jean Granger to Lord Harry James Potter-Black.'

Those words made her heart sing as all their children had survived unscathed and would be at the church on their special day, she and Dan were slipping notes into their friend's invitations explaining why they dropped off the planet and that they were looking forward to seeing them at the wedding.

Their explanation stuck closely to the truth, a deranged criminal who'd murdered the boy's parents and was now targeting Harry, putting Hermione in danger because she was his best friend. The couple fell in love and the capture of the criminal by an elite force

allowed them to return to Britain, the best friends who had become so much more to each other were now free to marry.

Emma remembering her son's idea of revenge had asked Harry if he wanted to invite the Dursleys, he was currently thinking about it.

The members of Liberty strolled through the ministry to complete one last piece of business, Hermione had made a promise to a crying boy and today that promise was going to be fulfilled – no one hurt her Harry and got away with it.

They entered Amelia's office to find her, Albus and Remus looking concerned, "There are no doubts?" Hermione asked.

Amelia shook her head, "None at all, she may have been manipulated in the case of Sirius but boasted about how it was her idea to use the same ploy with Hagrid, or the half-breed as she called him."

"Just what are you planning?" asked Albus.

"We plan for the report to read 'killed while trying to escape' just like Sirius and Hagrid, we are taking her to the edge of the forbidden forest and giving her a ten minute head start, if she's still alive an hour later then we'll let her go." Nobody believed that Hermione would be allowing her to escape.

Albus considered objecting before thinking of his large friend's last few minutes of life as he thought he had a chance of escaping from a prison he should never have been sent to in the first place. This woman was responsible, she'd had her trial, been found guilty and already sentenced to death, Liberty would ensure it was clean and quick so he just nodded his agreement.

This was how Deloris Umbridge came to find herself with the forbidden forest in front of her and the seven members of Liberty behind, she had her wand in her hand and was going to be given a ten minute start. Deloris would show these upstarts what a pureblood witch could do, as she made her way to the forest though that proved to be not very much as three arrows shot from the trees and all

imbedded deeply in the witches torso. She lay dying watching as the three centaurs carefully approach her with bows drawn but Deloris passed away before another arrow was needed.

Harry had his hand up halting his group from taking any action and as soon as the centaurs had established Deloris was dead the arrows were returned to their quivers, they approached Liberty and Harry recognised one of them.

"We meet again Firenze, have the years been good to you?" Harry asked.

"Alas no my lord but you have done us a great service today, this thing authorised hunting trips into the forest and not even the unicorns were safe. We fought back and were labelled dangerous creatures with a bounty on all our heads, some of our herd have been killed as we were forced to place our families deeper into the forest."

"We have a new government in place now and I can guarantee that Umbridge will be the last thing to be hunted in his forest, she was also responsible for the death of my godfather and our mutual friend Hagrid which is why she was brought here today. You did a service not only to your herd and the residents of the forest but to the country as well."

Firenze bowed, "The stars told of your destiny being fulfilled and great changes that will be sweeping the land, it pleases us that these will benefit the occupants of the forest as well. Harry there is one at the castle who waits for you; they will be trapped there for all eternity as you and you alone have the power to grant their freedom."

The seven turned to look at the castle which had been empty for over four years, "Do you know what the monster is?" asked Hermione.

The centaurs had a brief discussion before Firenze answered, "It is the mortal enemy of the spiders and the king of snakes, the creature is called a basilisk."

Their resident encyclopaedia filled in any of the group who didn't know what that was, "A basilisk is a very large snake which can kill

with a glance and there's no known antidote to its venom. Its hide is tougher than a dragon's skin and it moves just as fast."

"Thanks Hermione," said Nym "So we have a creature we can't look at yet have to kill, ideas?"

It was a thoughtful Draco who came up with the first one, "Snakes are usually cold blooded and get their body heat from the sun, as this lives in a suspected underground chamber it would need a heat source or be warm blooded. Either way it should register on our infra-red glasses which will also protect us from its eyes."

Hannah was next, "CS gas could help us with that as well, a couple of gas grenades in an enclosed space should stop it long enough for us to pump the beast full of jacketed hollow point bullets. Let's not forget this thing killed four puffs."

Neville's agreeing with Hannah was to be expected but his question got to the heart of the matter, "Ok so we can kill it but how do we find it?"

It was Firenze who supplied the answer, "The one who waits will lead the way."

Hermione wasn't yet convinced, "If there's someone to lead the way why does Harry have to be involved?"

The centaur explained, "Your husband is now the only person in the world capable of gaining access to the chamber, his ability to speak the language of the snakes is crucial."

"Also makes him one hell of a great kisser," offered Nym, "Ok people time to vote and same rules as usual, one no and we don't go!"

"If we can give Hogwarts back to the magical community that would be a special gift, I vote yes," said Susan.

Draco just shrugged his shoulders as if the question was irrelevant, "Someone needs help so Harry's going to go and I cover his back, I'll be there."

Neville and Hannah were already pouring over the shrunken and weightless weapons they had available while debating what was best for the task, "We vote go."

Harry and Hermione nodded their acceptance so Nym continued, "Right that's unanimous but remember..."

The six chorused back at her, "Let's be careful out there, don't do anything stupid or I'll have to hurt you!"

Nym actually blushed before receiving a hug from the whole team then Harry spoke to Firenze, indicating the body with three arrows sticking out of it. "Can you dispose of that while we head to the castle?"

"The Acromantula aren't too fussy what they eat so we'll just dump it close to their lair, take care in the castle and come back to visit us again sometime. You and your friends will always be welcome here."

The seven headed towards the castle pulling equipment from their belts and resizing it for use, before long they found themselves standing in front of the great doors of Hogwarts.

"You can just see tomorrow's headline in the Prophet, 'Harry Potter returns to Hogwarts,'" Draco quipped.

"Harry Potter, he's here?"

The voice had them all searching for a target when a ghost came through the still closed door, she was a young girl with long hair and dressed in Gryffindor robes. "Harry Potter?" she asked.

"That would be me," Harry said as he stepped forward to meet the ghost.

"Oh Harry, I knew you'd come to save me. You're my hero and I've loved you forever!"

“Aw shit, as if it isn’t bad enough having fangirls chasing after my husband I’ve now got a bloody fanghost to put up with as well.”

The ghost of Ginny Weasley never even heard Hermione; her entire attention was focused on the drop-dead gorgeous figure of Harry Potter standing in front of her.

A/N thanks for reading, only one chapter left to go.

Chapter 12

Petunia Dursley chatted pleasantly to the postman before checking through their mail, noticing that one item was handwritten on a stiff white envelope she opened it first and had to sit down as the breath had just been knocked out of her. She held in her trembling hands an invitation that had just rocketed her world out of its nice stable orbit. Vernon came over to determine what was wrong with his wife and discovered she couldn't even speak; he took the wedding invitation from her shaking grasp and looked nonplussed as a note fell to the floor.

Reading the names on the invitation had him joining the note, sitting on the floor beside his wife. Gathering his courage he reached for the slip of paper, unfolded it and began reading out loud.

Dear Dursleys

My name is Emma Granger and we've actually met before though we were not properly introduced at the time, our daughter Hermione was the girl that Vernon grabbed that day in the station where my husband pointed out that laying hands on our daughter was not a good idea.

I feel compelled to inform you that this action also cost your family their home and employment as Harry was prepared to forgive your treatment of him but NOBODY touches Hermione and gets away with it .I write this purely to convey that, should you decide to attend with the purpose of causing a scene on our daughter's wedding day Harry's wrath would know no bounds.

Harry has been my son for the last five years and is already married to Hermione in the magical world but while both have embraced magic they have continued adhering to their non-magical roots which is why he wants her to have the church wedding of her dreams.

For all that time they and their close friends have trained and fought a civil war that ended last week when Harry led an army against the British ministry, killing the evil wizard who had murdered his parents and tried to kill him. He's a hero throughout the world but to me he'll

always be my son Harry, a man with more capacity for love than anyone I've ever met and I bless the day he became part of my family.

If you wish to attend I think we should arrange to meet for dinner, getting any awkwardness out of the way before the wedding and allowing time for you to become reacquainted. Harry is no longer the skinny, bespectacled little boy you remember but a proud warrior of whom there's already talk of erecting statues to.

Please reply

Emma Granger.

Dudley wondered what was keeping his parents so he and his girlfriend Jasmine went to look for them, finding both sitting staring into space had him raising a questioning eyebrow until his father provided the answer.

"We've solved the puzzle of the mysterious Lord who's marrying that local girl next week, it's Harry and we're invited to the wedding."

Dudley also ended on his bum sitting on the floor as his legs refused to bear even his greatly reduced weight, a bemused Jasmine lifted the invitation while Vernon hid the note as her eyes nearly popped out her head. "Hermione Granger is marrying some lord, do you know him?"

Dudley nodded before asking, "Do you know her?"

"We were in the same class at primary school, buck teeth, bushy hair and scarily intelligent so she was bullied something rotten by everyone. She went to some private boarding school for a year then the whole family just disappeared off the face of the planet, sold their dental practice and, come to think of it I can't even remember where they lived. The ridiculous story going around about this wedding is that some master criminal was after them and they had to flee the country, who could possibly believe that?"

“Believe it or not because it’s actually true, he was after Harry and this Hermione Granger was his best friend, Harry is our nephew and had to leave the country so we moved as well.” Petunia’s statement had all the Dursleys going over the last five years of their lives.

Vernon had soon discovered what it felt like to be unwelcome in a family member’s home; Marge was fine for a week or so before the continual bitching started. They had money saved but wanted to wait until he had a job before buying a house to try and reduce travelling to and from his new place of employment, with nothing turning up in four months they were getting desperate for a place of their own.

Marge had Dudley working in her kennels all summer and then every weekend while Petunia helped with the administration generated from running your own business before having her ‘eureka!’ moment.

In bed with Vernon that night she passed on her idea, “I know you’re having difficulty finding a decent job without a reference but I had an idea today that might solve all our problems, Marge is her own boss with her business attached to her home so I was wondering if something like that couldn’t work for us.”

Vernon’s eyes lit up and they spent most of the night discussing what type of business they could run as a family, three weeks later they had a bid accepted on a small grocers store in Crawley that included accommodation above the shop. The store was only four hundred yards from the now fidelius charmed home of the Grangers.

Dudley had worked his arse off helping set up their new home and shop; they discussed the situation as a family and had ploughed every penny they owned into this business so if it didn’t work they were out on the street or back at Marge’s.

Dudley had his eyes well and truly opened during his stay with Aunt Marge as the kindly lady who used to visit Privet Drive had been replaced by this alien being who ordered them about as if they were freaks. The revelation that this was how they had treated Harry was not lost on them, Dudley would quite happily carry cases of beans from the basement storage area and place the cans on the

appropriate shelf as anything was better than continually cleaning out dog kennels.

It had been physically, financially and psychologically hard for the first few years but they had persevered and were now starting to reap the benefits, probably the hardest thing in the beginning was being pleasant to everyone who entered their shop as this was not a natural trait of the Dursley family but essential if you wanted repeat business.

Their store was now flourishing thanks purely to their own hard work and both Vernon and Dudley had shed the pounds to prove it but perhaps the biggest change was in their attitude, when Dudley had brought Jasmine home and introduced her as his girlfriend both Vernon and Petunia had been delighted. The girl's parents were frequent customers of their shop and really nice people but the Privet Drive Dursleys would never have accepted Jasmine because her skin was black.

Yes they were different people now so did they want to reintroduce Harry back into their lives? They would talk about it as a family later but in the meantime they needed to get up off their collective arses and go through to serve some customers.

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Liberty stood waiting for fan-ghost Ginny to supply them with information like 'why were they here?' but the pubescent poltergeist was far too busy staring at Harry with ectoplasmic drool practically dripping off her chin. Nym beat Hermione to the punch, "Excuse me miss but we were told there was someone here who needed our help and could lead us to this basilisk, could you tell us who that is?"

It was impossible for a ghost to blush but that didn't mean Ginny didn't give it her best attempt, "That would be me, my body lies down in the chamber of secrets and I can't cross over while it remains there. By the time I became a ghost the castle was deserted and you are the first real people I've ever talked to, my spirit is tied to the grounds of the castle and can't move beyond its boundaries. The basilisk is in the chamber sleeping and has been since the students were killed, it

won't come out again until it's called so the castle is perfectly safe at the moment."

She then got as close to Harry as ghostly possible without actually passing into his body, "I know you killed him Harry, I could feel my life force being set free from his evilness. You're so brave Harry to defeat him once again and I'm just sorry we never got to meet," she panted.

The idea of this pre-teen ghost salivating all over Harry had the members of Liberty battling to try and hold their laughter in as their leader squirmed and Hermione was ready to explode.

"Em miss, do you think you could lead us to this chamber?" Harry asked.

"Oh Harry, my name's Ginny and you should know I'll do anything for you," she attempted to take his hand and lead him through the still closed door which proved too much for Draco.

The blond wizard was on the floor, laughing his arse off at Harry's discomfort which opened the floodgates for the others. Soon only Hermione and Harry were left standing but when Ginny's head appeared back through the door with a serious pout on and enquired if Harry was coming Hermione lost herself to laughter as well.

They made their way through the castle with a severe case of the giggles as the fan-ghost chatted incessantly to Harry the entire time but they pulled up short when the team reached their apparent destination of a girl's bathroom.

"What is it with you and girl's bathrooms Harry?" sniggered Nym.

"Hey I'll have you know I fell in love with my wife in a girl's bathroom, she was in there with this right troll though," this had the effect of rendering Nym speechless and earned him a kiss from Hermione.

"Well done darling, you finally got the better of Nym's teasing," it also had Ginny fuming.

They entered the bathroom and Ginny shouted, "Hey Myrtle, get out here and meet my Harry, I told you he would be coming for me."

Before any of the group could say anything another ghost appeared from one of the cubicles and immediately ran her eyes hungrily over three of the most gorgeous guys she'd ever seen in her life or death. "Hello there boys, they call me moaning Myrtle and if you want to hang about you can find out why."

Suddenly Draco didn't find the situation quite so humorous, "Ginny why are we in here and how do we get out?"

Ginny was more concerned with Myrtle at the moment, in another situation it would have been funny watching a ghost trying to stamp her foot in anger, "I've told you for years that Harry's mine, you can have the other two. Harry you need to say 'open' in parseltongue to that sink there."

Harry had his arm around Hermione who was now grinding her teeth in an attempt to hold her temper, as this ghost's antics were increasingly less amusing, he approached the indicated sink and did the deed. Everyone watched as the sinks all moved to reveal a slide that led into the bowels of Hogwarts.

Myrtle batted her eyelashes, "If any of you boys get killed down there you're more than welcome to share my toilet, we could be nice and cosy in the u-bend."

Draco was into the tube like a ferret down a rabbit hole to escape from Myrtle before Nym regained control of the situation, "Nice of you to volunteer for point duty Draco so radio back with the situation, at the moment all our Intel is coming from a ghost whose not playing with a full bag of marbles and I'm not happy with that. This is a combat situation here so time to put our game faces on."

Draco's voice came back over their earpieces, "Guys this place is dark, damp, filthy and a couple of inches deep underfoot in what I hope are animal bones. Oh Merlin! Can you ask Harry's ghostly groupie just how big this bloody thing is?"

Harry turned to the ghost, "Ginny, just how big is this basilisk?"

"Oh it's at least sixty feet long with the wickedest fangs you've ever seen."

Susan was down the tube before anyone could say another word.

"She's not bloody joking guys, there's a shed skin here that's at least fifty feet, hey Suz nice of you to join me."

"There's a tunnel that leads to another door that Harry will have to open before you reach the chamber proper," Ginny said.

Draco's voice came back to them, "Can confirm that as well, large circular vault-type door covered in metal snakes. Need Harry down here before we can proceed any further."

"Ok, we'll be right down," Nym turned to the others "we really should leave someone up here in case anything goes wrong down there, any takers?"

One by one the other four silently jumped into the tube leaving Nym standing there herself, "I didn't think so," as she followed them down.

Liberty stood at the door and went over their strategy, Harry and Hermione would each fire a couple of CS gas grenades at it then fall back to their trusty magical Ruger MP9 submachine guns while the rest of them would be using their automatic rifles, loaded with the heaviest ammunition they carried to pour bullets into its head area.

They put on their infra-red goggles and cast bubble-head charms before Harry hissed at the door, it opened and torches lit along the walls giving Liberty points of reference as they slowly checked the chamber.

Harry scanned the chamber but except for Liberty nothing showed, he found that by looking down under his infra-red glasses he could see where he was stepping and advised the team to use this method to ensure they didn't trip over anything. He almost had a heart attack

when a voice right beside him said “It won’t come until it’s called you know, I’m lying over there waiting on you Harry.”

He cancelled the charm and lifted his glasses to see ghostly Ginny very close to him pointing at a small body lying up ahead; Harry approached and couldn’t believe his eyes as the body was in perfect condition. The body of Ginny Wesley looked as if it had just fell asleep an hour ago and would wake up any minute refreshed and ready for class.

“I think there’s some kind of time spell on this chamber as the basilisk has been here over a thousand years but had lived a long life and was about fifty feet long when Salazar brought it here.” She gazed longingly at Harry, “It looks as if love’s first kiss could awaken me.”

This was the last straw for Lady Potter-Black, “Harry James Potter, if you even think about kissing a corpse that’s been lying there for five years then you better practice puckering up to Hedwig because I won’t be kissing that mouth for at least the next decade!” Hermione’s voice may have been ice cold but they could all tell her anger was simmering just below the surface.

Harry tried to return everyone’s focus to the task at hand, “Ginny where does the basilisk come from and how do I call it?”

“It comes out of that statue’s mouth and you have to call in parseltongue saying something like ‘I am heir to Salazar Slytherin, greatest of the Hogwarts four, come and do my bidding’ and it will answer you.”

Harry gently picked up the body and moved it over against the wall as Nym set up their lines of fire, fan-ghost Ginny went gaga and spun like a top while rising up to the roof.

“I’m in Harry Potter’s arms, I’m in Harry Potter’s arms – oh mum will be so thrilled.”

Hermione certainly wasn't and looked ready to rip the basilisk's head off with her bare hands and stuff the gushing ghoul down its neck.

Harry stood beside her and checked everyone was ready before putting on his infra-red glasses, placing a bubble-head charm and called for the beast.

Through their bond Hermione found she could understand parseltongue though was unable to speak it so when the beast replied, "You are not my master and will die" she was already firing a CS canister into the mouth of the statue.

The shape that showed up on infra-red was enormous as the Potters fired the gas and retreated to give the rest of the team a clear shot, their MP9's were enhanced with magical magazines that held five hundred bullets each which should keep even a basilisk off them long enough for the heavier weapons to bring it down.

The noise in the chamber was terrible as the basilisk screamed from its burning eyes and the bullets slapping into its body, it was dead in less than two minutes. Liberty gave the beast the same chance those students had in the corridor, none at all.

Hermione smashed a vial of potion on the floor which absorbed the gas right out the air as the team removed their glasses to get a look at the beast, a slow whistle from Neville summed up all their feelings.

Ginny the ghoul floated down from the ceiling, "Oh Harry that was so impressive but really all you needed was a cock!"

Hermione exploded, "That's it! I'm going to exorcise the little slut right here and now."

Nym grabbed her before she could do anything but Ginny just continued as if Hermione didn't exist, "Tom had me kill all Hagrid's cockerels because the crowing of a cock is deadly to the basilisk."

All of Liberty turned in Hermione's direction as she blushed like a traffic light, "Hey I can't be expected to remember everything, I made a mistake so sue me!"

Nym's grip became a hug, "Hermione we're just glad you make mistakes like the rest of us, by my count that's your first."

Harry came over and kissed his wife, "Hermione darling to me you're still perfect." This was exactly the right thing to say as she quickly calmed down.

Harry removed his mirror, "Albus Dumbledore – hi professor the team is currently standing in the chamber of secrets at Hogwarts with a rather large but extremely dead basilisk."

This was met with total silence from the other end.

"We would appreciate it if you could come and bring Amelia and Griphook with you, the entrance is in a girls bathroom that's home to a ghost named Myrtle."

Albus was only capable of nodding as all the pieces of the puzzle fell into place for him and he ended the call to get moving.

"Harry when you take my body out of the chamber I'll be able to cross over, I can wait for you if you like."

Harry tried to let the young ghost down gently, "Ginny, my wife and I are soul bound and will be together in the next life as well as this one, I have plenty of room in my heart for family and friends but Hermione holds my very soul. I can never love another the way I love her so it would be wrong of me to ask you to wait for something that can never happen."

Albus raced into the fabled chamber to be met with the sobbing ghost of Ginny Weasley and a sight never seen before, the biggest bloody basilisk that ever lived.

Amelia, Remus and Griphook were right behind Albus and their reactions were identical to his, the sheer awe of the spectacle in front of them really didn't require words.

“Hi auntie, I think we can say Hogwarts is now safe to re-open,” said Susan while the team packed their gear away.

Harry called Griphook over, “How much would you say this is worth and how would that gold usually be distributed?”

“I have no idea Harry other than to say it’s worth a fortune, a basilisk of this size has never been found. As to the distribution Hogwarts would be due a slice but most of it would go to the finders, there really is no precedent for this.” The goblin replied.

After a brief conversation with Hermione over their bond Harry made a proposal, “How about this, one third to Hogwarts to get the place up and running, one third placed in a fund to help the victims of this war and the last third to the finder’s family, the Weasleys.”

Amelia objected to the split, Draco and Susan were getting married at Christmas and she felt they deserved a share along with the other members of the team. Even sharing one-third between Liberty would set the young couple up for married life. “Harry I think you’re being overgenerous there, the team took down the beast so should share in the spoils.”

Harry saw right through her and smiled, he went over and put his arm on her shoulders, “Amelia if this is what I’m doing for strangers then I don’t think my friends will ever have to worry.”

Amelia actually blushed like a schoolgirl at having been so easily read by Harry, “There’s nothing wrong in caring for your family Amelia and Susan and Draco are family to me as well, the Weasleys have it pretty hard with loosing both their youngest children, Percy’s trial is tomorrow and the twins told us they haven’t been home for three years after their father had to pull them off Ron when he spouted his pureblood pish. A lot of fences will need mending before this country is back up and running so if a little gold can help then I’m all for it.”

Griphook walked over with a little black book in his hand, the T. M. Riddle on the front was all the clue the goblin needed. “I think this is how he did it, the girl would write in this and he would answer

worming his way a little further into her soul every time. She would have needed a pretty strong anchor to resist him.”

Ginny’s ghost was still crying, “I’m sorry Harry, when you got married Tom told me he would help me win you back. I was dead before I realised he was lying to me.”

“No one blames you Ginny, Voldemort fooled the whole country for years. I would have liked the chance to get to know you as I think you would have made a terrific friend.”

A ghostly blush covered her face, “Thanks Harry, I think I could have lived with that but now we’ll never know.”

They watched as Albus conjured a cover for the body and headed towards the door, ghostly Ginny kissed Harry on the cheek before fading into nothing.

Remus spoke to Amelia, “I think we need to get Cissi and Minerva down here along with all the press we can muster, it’s imperative that people know Hogwarts will be safe and having the new head and depute standing in front of the basilisk is about the best way I can think of.”

“Ok people the press are coming, that’s our cue to leave,” yelled Nym “And we all know Draco is just dying to chat to that cute ghost Myrtle again.”

The group groaned at Nym’s sense of humour but didn’t intend to wait around for the press, Liberty had just completed what they all hoped would be their last mission.

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Arthur Weasley looked round the figures sitting at what had been the hub of a very happy family, there were no smiles at the Weasley kitchen table today as they had just buried their youngest member. The gentle wizard couldn’t help but think he’d failed Ron somehow as

the twisted and bitter man he had been growing into bore no resemblance to the remaining members of the family.

He had four sons sitting round the table with the missing one, Percy going on trial tomorrow to determine his level of involvement in the ministry's crimes. He'd been one of the wizards on top of the steps but Arthur prayed his authority-obsessed son hadn't been involved in any of the atrocities that were carried out in the ministry's name.

His gaze rested on his wife and though Arthur blamed himself for Ron he knew Molly had never forgiven herself for Ginny, it took her two years to finally admit their daughter wasn't coming back to them.

He was sure his wife had some kind of breakdown but with his department at the ministry being no-longer needed as misuse of muggles was actually encouraged, he found himself forced into retirement with a pittance of a pension that didn't allow for expensive medical care, it barely allowed them to put food on the table.

Fred and George found themselves having to flee the country after violently disagreeing with Ron's pureblood ranting and only Lord Potter-Black's education budget allowed them to continue living and attending school in France. The new way for advancement in their pureblood society had been to inform on a family member and since the twins couldn't bear to be in the same house as Ron anyway this was the first time they'd been back since.

The following summer Ron arrived home leading his reward by her collar, Molly was most definitely not in her right mind and just treated Elizabeth like a daughter-in-law who she thought needed fattening-up. Molly was right but the reason she was so skinny soon became apparent as Ron ate most of her food after he cleared his own plate. This year he had arrived with Ann as well and they had been stretched to the limit trying to feed everyone with Ron still eating everything within his reach.

They had received a letter from the girls dissolving them of any blame for their son's behaviour and thanking both he and Molly for the care they were shown at the burrow, Arthur had been in tears for hours at that.

They were all sitting quietly hoping they weren't going to have to go through this again when the noise of someone appearing outside had all the men reaching for their wands while Molly went to put the kettle on, a well known voice shouting 'hello the burrow' calmed their fears as Albus Dumbledore had come to visit.

The ancient wizard felt every one of his years bear down on him with the emotional intensity of his task as he carried Ginny's body into the house and laid her gently on the kitchen table, the only sound heard was Molly's favourite teapot hitting the floor and shattering into thousands of little pieces as it slipped from her numb hands.

Albus really didn't know what to say in this situation so just stuck to the facts, "Liberty entered Hogwarts today and killed a sixty foot basilisk in Slytherin's chamber of secrets before recovering Ginny's body. She'd been possessed by a dark magic item that held Voldemort's horcrux and he used Ginny's life energy to return, that information is classified and won't be published as the unsuspecting girl never had a chance against the dark lord."

Albus waved his wand to remove the cover off Ginny and then had to quickly use it again to stop Molly hitting the floor as she fainted, he levitated her through to the other room and placed her on the sofa while trying not to intrude on the soul racking sobs coming from the five grown men in the other room.

He was soon joined though by a very angry Bill Weasley, "I know what a horcrux is and someone had to give it to Ginny, I want a name Albus."

"It was given to her by Lucius Malfoy who has already paid for it with his life and family name."

Bill was still looking for someone to lash out at, "He had a son, that will do for me."

Albus shook his head, "Bill, Draco has been a Black and fighting for the light since before Ginny died, he's a member of Liberty and was down in that chamber to kill the beast and recover Ginny's body."

Bill felt Fred's hand on his shoulder, "Listen Bill, George and I beat ourselves up over this for ages, wondering if we hadn't left Hogwarts would we have been able to save her. We eventually had to reach the decision that we were not to blame, we now know it was Voldemort and Lucius Malfoy. Draco isn't anything like his father and both of us were there when they took down a dozen death eaters that attacked at Harry's seventeenth birthday party. Trust me when I say they took them down, they did it in under ten seconds and none of the death eaters got back up."

George had joined them, "We spoke to Draco at that party and he's definitely one of the good guys, the name Black has been turned to the light by him, Harry and that other girl Nym. Sexiest, most beautiful woman I've ever seen but you just know if you step out of line she could rip your head off and spit down your neck. These guys are a team Bill and you seriously don't want to mess with them, especially when you're in the wrong."

Albus could see the twins were getting through their brothers grief driven anger, "I also have seen them in action, they went through an entire camp like ghosts and again none of the death eaters got back up. I was there hoping to try and sneak a couple of the prisoners away while they rescued the entire camp and got them all to safety in a few minutes. I had the honour of standing shoulder to shoulder with them when we re-took the ministry and Draco, Neville and Harry are three of the finest young men this country has produced. Draco is also marrying the minister's niece at Christmas while his mother is the new headmaster of Hogwarts as Minerva opted to regain her old position. I know what it feels like to want to lash out in anger Bill, I wanted that sadistic, murdering liar Snape to suffer so much I could taste it. When Snape got the drop on Hermione at the ministry Draco killed the man who was his godfather without a second's hesitation."

Molly woke and began sobbing, "Oh Albus, thank you for bringing my little girl home. Every night I still have visions of her lying alone in some dark, damp place and wondering why her mum doesn't come for her or the nightmare of the poor dear being savaged by some unknown beast. She looks so serene and at peace, please will you

thank Lord Potter-Black and the rest of his team for allowing us to say goodbye to our little girl properly.”

Arthur now had his arms round Molly, “Albus how can she be in that condition?”

“We think it’s something to do with the magic in the chamber though whether it will continue now that the basilisk is dead we don’t know. I must also tell you that Liberty have awarded a third of the gold raised from the carcass of the basilisk to the Weasley family as Ginny was the one who found it, the rest is going to help Hogwarts restart and as aid for the victims of this war.”

Bill was now looking embarrassed for his earlier outburst, “Albus even a small basilisk could generate a fortune in potion ingredients alone, you said this thing was sixty feet long?”

“Yes it’s easily the biggest basilisk the world has ever seen, Griphook couldn’t even put an estimate on how much gold it would generate and that’s saying something for a goblin.”

Arthur hated doing this but needed to know, “Albus what have you heard concerning Percy?”

The old wizard choose his words carefully, “Our initial investigations have Percy tagged as a low level collaborator, he did what he was told but didn’t seem to be involved in anything that would cost him his life. We have been attempting to get people who fall into this bracket to work for the benefit of the magical community for a set period of time rather than sending them straight to Azkaban and it looks likely that this will be the outcome with your son.”

Arthur sagged back onto the sofa with relief while Molly kissed Albus on the cheek before joining Charlie who was still sitting with Ginny, the Weasleys would be having another funeral after all but this one was a blessing as they finally got the chance to say farewell to their only daughter and lay her to rest in peace.

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The Dursleys were in the back of a fabulous limousine on route to meet with Harry, they had finally decided to attend and Dudley had dug his heels in claiming that if he had anything to do with it Jasmine would be joining their family so might as well find out what she was letting herself in for. The girl was excited and a little worried as, while she hadn't been the worse at bullying Hermione when she was at primary school she had certainly been involved. The chauffeur had handed them each a personal invitation to Potter Manor but what they didn't know was that without this they wouldn't even see the building.

The limo windows were tinted to ensure that the occupants couldn't discover it's method of travelling and only twenty minutes later it pulled up in front of what could only be described as a mansion. They walked gobsmacked up the stairs and were greeted at the massive double doors by Emma and Dan Granger, "Welcome to Potter Manor, Harry and the rest will be right down. I hope you don't mind but everyone at dinner tonight has lived with us so long we all consider one another family and always try and eat at least one meal together every day."

At the sound of laughter they looked up and watched as the seven members of Liberty joked their way down the sweeping staircase and all three Dursleys felt like antelope that had been invited to dinner by a pride of lions. Just the way these people moved screamed predator and proclaimed 'mess with us at your peril'.

Harry walked over to the stunned group with his arm round Hermione's waist, "Good evening everyone, glad you could make it." He shook hands with Vernon and Dudley and kissed Petunia and Jasmine on the cheek before carrying out the introductions.

Jasmine was totally out of her depth, the invitations had said casual dress but these four young women redefined the meaning of that term, they were simply stunning and obviously very close leaving Jasmine feeling like an outsider from another world.

Hermione sensed this and took the girl by the arm, "I'm borrowing Jasmine to discover all the gossip I've missed out on, coming girls?"

They led the girl away while Draco and Neville headed into the games room leaving Harry with the Dursleys and Grangers, he showed them into another reception room and had them seated before speaking, "Dudley I'm assuming this is serious between you both or you wouldn't have brought Jasmine here tonight."

Dudley was having a hard time equating the man in front of him as Harry but one look into those eyes and he felt compelled to tell the truth, "I'm saving up to buy her an engagement ring before asking her to marry me after we finish college."

Harry appeared deep in thought for a few seconds when in fact he was discussing his next move with his wife, "Dudley if there's one thing I've learned it's to live life for today because you never know what tomorrow brings. Jake!" The elf appeared wearing a glamour, "I need you to go to Gringotts and bring me the case that Hermione liked so much the first time she saw it and why haven't I seen my goddaughter today?"

Jake was beaming with pride, their daughter was born just as they re-took the ministry and the couple had asked for permission to name the baby 'Liberty', Harry had agreed if he and Hermione could be the godparents making Jake and Sophie even prouder than they already were with baby Libby becoming the apple of everyone's eye.

"She's slept most of the day my Lord but I'm sure Sophie could bring her by when she wakes in the middle of the night." He popped away leaving Harry smiling and shaking his head, "Nym is really a bad influence on them."

"Harry saying you've changed is probably the biggest understatement of the century, just what have you been doing?" Petunia asked.

"That's a story for another time when we've got a week or two to spare," Jake had popped back, "Dudley if Jasmine is going to be family then are you ready to make it official?"

Harry opened the case that Jake had given him and his cousin was dumbstruck, "These are rings that have been in my family for generations and you're family Dudley, you can choose one for her or let Jasmine choose for herself, assuming she says yes of course," Harry joked.

Petunia had tears streaming down her cheeks, they'd treated this boy terribly yet here he was helping her Dudley, she could have handled him shouting at her better than this which was tearing her heart out with remorse at her treatment of her sister's son.

Dudley was now shaking, "I think it would be better if she chose her own ring but now I'm terrified that I'll mess up asking her, how did you manage to ask Hermione?"

Harry gave a rye smile, "I was eleven and didn't think I was going to see the next morning never mind twelve, Hermione had to go and get help while I faced the monster that killed my parents so I just took her in my arms and kissed her. A few weeks later we were becoming betrothed when our magic took over and married us, we had our fifth wedding anniversary last month and share a soul bond that lets me know Jasmine is spilling all your secrets to the girls Dudley."

The Dursley's looked from Harry to the Grangers in disbelief, "Harry always tells the truth and as you can imagine I was not too happy at my daughter being married before becoming a teenager, I have to admit though that I was wrong and he's the best thing ever to happen to our family and as much my son as Hermione is my daughter."

Dan's ringing endorsement led to Vernon speaking for the first time that evening, "Harry why are you doing this for Dudley?"

Harry looked his uncle directly in the eyes, "Dudley is serious about Jasmine but it's against our law to tell her about magic unless she's family, putting a ring on her finger helps both of them out and allows us to have open discussions. We all lived in New York for five years and everyone here tonight is quite comfortable in both worlds so please don't feel pressured into this, it's your choice Dudley."

"I so want to do this, I just hope she doesn't freak out!"

At the use of that word all the Dursleys had a sharp intake of breath but Harry was very calm, "Guys I've had to killed people with my bare hands, that word has no power to hurt me anymore. I've just asked Hermione to bring Jasmine in so get ready cousin."

Jasmine was a lot calmer by the time she returned, these girls were not only beautiful and extremely close but good company as well. Hermione seemed to bear her no ill will and was genuinely interested in what she'd been doing since they last met. She noticed the tension in Dudley the second she entered the room and his mother had all the signs of having been crying, Jasmine was starting to wonder just why she'd been quickly separated from her boyfriend when he walked over to her and dropped to one knee.

"Jasmine you are the best thing that's ever happened to me and I want to be with you for the rest of my life, will you marry me?"

The room was totally silent as everybody awaited Jasmine's answer, "You know I want to Dudley but I have to ask why here, why now?"

Dudley was still on one knee trying to make his mouth work, "Harry has offered to supply the ring."

Jasmine now gave Harry a questioning look, which he couldn't ignore; "There are secrets that only family are allowed to know, putting on Dudley's ring makes you family allowing us to talk freely about anything. Dudley wouldn't have brought you here tonight if he didn't care deeply about you and is already saving to buy a ring, I'm just helping my cousin out by offering a family ring."

Jasmine's brow furrowed in concentration, "You're not all vampires or something?"

Harry laughed, "No vampires but you might find the odd werewolf thrown in for good measure."

She looked back down at a now perspiring Dudley and smiled, "Yes Dudley I'll marry you but you get the job of telling my mum and dad."

It was a relieved Dudley who got up and kissed his new fiancée before leading her over and opening the case, Jasmine almost swooned when she saw the choice available. Her eyes were immediately drawn to one that had a pear shaped diamond in an elegant setting of white gold, it was exquisite and her parents combined annual salaries would probably just manage a down payment on the ring of her dreams.

Dudley noticed where her eyes kept returning and a quick nod from Harry had him removing it from the case and slipping it onto Jasmine's finger. The ring shrunk to fit but she was so mesmerised by the moment that she didn't even notice, Dudley got another kiss before everyone was given a chance to view the ring in its rightful setting.

Harry watched as both Hannah and Susan kept returning for another look inside the case, "Girls you know I think of you as family and should any gentlemen be lucky enough to have you fall in love with them I would be honoured if you chose one of these rings."

"Well, guess that's our cue Nev!"

"Ok Draco but since they decided the wedding date already shouldn't they be the ones doing the asking?"

"Do you really want to tell your kids that the wife asked for your hand?"

"Ok let's do this."

Both pulled ring boxes from their pockets, knelt before the girls and asked in unison, "Will you marry me?" before squealing in pain as Nym twisted their ears.

"Ok you pair of jokers now try kneeling before the right girl or so help me Merlin I'll convince them to say no."

"Aw Nym, I wanted to see what was in the box in case I changed my mind," joked Susan.

"I don't mind you having a try of my ring but keep your hands off my Neville!" Both girls burst out laughing before their young wizards knelt and did it properly.

Nym felt a pair of arms encircling her from behind as she wiped a tear away, "Are you ok?" Harry asked.

She leant back into him, "Yea, I just think I'm never going to find someone for myself. I mean I'm beautiful, talented, athletic and thanks to you little brother filthy rich, what chance have I got of finding someone?"

Harry smiled and kissed her cheek, "You forgot modest with a great sense of humour."

She twirled round and hugged him, "Hey Harry, you're getting better at the comebacks, must be all the practice I give you."

He was saved from any more teasing by Jake announcing that dinner was served.

Jasmine sat at dinner with the casual explanation that magic was real and she was surrounded by witches and wizards ringing in her ears but it was to the ring on her finger that her attention kept returning. The girls mind had equated that the ring was real therefore magic must be real, the plates appearing and disappearing occasionally made the Dursley's jump but Jasmine found it to be the most exciting night of her life.

Dudley asked the question that the whole wizarding world wanted answered, "Now that the war is over what will you do?"

It was Nym who jumped in first with an answer, "Take a vacation!" This drew some laughter until people saw she was serious, "We've put our lives on the line time and time again, seen things no one has a right to see and been forced into taking the type of actions that none of us would have considered even a few years ago. We have to try to get some normality back into our lives and our choices would appear to be lying on some strangers couch and spilling our guts to

find out were repressing memories – Doh! The other option is to be there for each other helping those who have a bad day by understanding exactly what their going through. Personally I choose to have Harry rub sun tan lotion on me while listening to the sound of the surf during the day and dance with these gorgeous young men in the evenings. Harry has just divided the Black fortune between me and Draco, Neville is very wealthy in his own right and the Potters here are bloody loaded, it's time for us to be carefree and celebrate the fact that we came through this in one piece.”

Nym found herself receiving hugs and kisses from the rest of the team and the Grangers before Vernon asked a question that had been bugging him since they got their invitation. “Harry how did you find us? Very few people from our old life knew where we went.”

Harry actually appeared embarrassed, “When you bid for that shop we made sure the bid was accepted because it was right next to an area we already had under observation, your shop is only a few hundred yards from mum and dad’s house and the plan was to put you there if you needed rescuing. You are my last remaining blood relatives and they would have given a lot to get there hands on the Dursleys, I had you guarded night and day to make sure that wouldn’t happen.”

Petunia was really struggling with her emotions, “Why Harry?”

Harry looked at his aunt as if she was crazy, “We repeatedly risked our lives to rescue people who were strangers to us, do you think we would leave you to be tortured and killed?”

She ran from the room in tears as that was apparently what she did think, “I’ll go Harry,” said Emma as she followed the crying woman out the room.

Petunia was holding on to the banister at the bottom of the stairs, not knowing where to go as Emma led her to the Granger’s first floor bedroom and into their own bathroom.

Petunia was washing her face as she spoke to Emma, “Is Harry doing this for revenge because we treated him terribly as a child?”

Emma sat the woman down beside her, "Harry is the kindest, most generous man I've ever met who doesn't have a deceitful or dishonest bone in his body. I've watched him and the group grow into the people you see now, I've cried when they went on missions and wept when they returned safely. I love him like my own and he wants your family to be part of his life which is why I'm sitting here talking to you, my instincts are to scratch your eyes out for hurting my son but that's not what Harry wants. He's seen enough death and torture to last him a lifetime so is holding out the hand of friendship to the Dursleys, please understand I am not. For a mother to do that to her sister's child is so wrong it makes my blood boil but for the love of my son I will give you another chance, hurt him again and nothing will stop me. You've built a nice business and home for yourself that I could destroy with a few home truths in some well chosen ears, I know these people and you would be run out of Crawley. You've been given a second chance that I don't think you deserve but if you can't accept Harry's lifestyle tell him now before you break his heart again."

Strangely enough this was just what Petunia needed to hear, Harry's forgiveness was eating away at her because this woman was right – she didn't deserve it. "Thank you for your honesty, I actually appreciate it. I would now like to return downstairs and hope I haven't spoiled anyone's evening."

They re-entered the dining room and Harry immediately got to his feet to check everything was alright and ended up in an uncomfortable hug with his aunt, "I know sorry isn't good enough but it's all I can offer at the moment, I hope we can start over and get to really know one another and your beautiful wife to."

Harry could only nod at his eventual acceptance by his family, he thought that he was over that but a small corner of his mind still craved their approval. Drama over they moved through to the lounge for drinks and coffee, Harry pulled his cousin aside, "Dudley would you stand with me at my wedding? The three girls are Hermione's bridesmaids and while I have Draco and Nev I could use a third."

“Harry I would be honoured, I just want you to know I’m no longer that arsehole you grew up with and anything I can do you only have to ask.”

Lying in bed that night holding his wife Harry felt as if he’d exorcised some of the ghosts that haunted his childhood, Hermione knew exactly how he felt because she had the same feelings after dealing with Jasmine.

“Did mum have words with Petunia?” Harry asked.

“Oh I think we can assume that’s a safe bet, I also saw dad being rather intense with Vernon in a corner. They’re struggling to understand where we’re coming from.”

Harry held her tighter, “I know love but we’ve seen where hate can lead, if I can genuinely forgive them then it removes a dark stain from my soul. We’ll all carry the burden of the people whose lives we took till our dying day but this was like a sore that could have festered, instead the wounds have begun to heal and may even grow into something that’s healthy.”

“Harry you will never go dark as your family and friends just wouldn’t allow it, speaking of family I think it’s about time we started adding to ours.”

“Now that my brilliant wife is one of the best ideas you ever had.”

-oOoOo-

Every male on the beach over the age of twelve thought Harry Potter was the luckiest son of a bitch on the planet, the wizard in question just happened to agree wholeheartedly with that opinion. He’d just finished applying sun tan lotion to his pregnant wife and was now rubbing it into Nym’s back while thinking she really knew her stuff, this was way better than lying on some physiatrist’s couch. They were at the Potter house in Australia with the two honeymooning couples who’d missed coming down to the beach again today, there seemed to be some friendly rivalry going on as to who was going to get

pregnant first between Susan and Hannah with both husbands very willing accomplices.

They had spent so much time as a group looking out for one another that when they were separated for any length of time they started to worry how the others were. Harry and Hermione's honeymoon was only five days old when they contacted Nym to see if the rest of the group wanted to join them in Italy, such was the state of agitation amongst the five that they arrived in time for dinner and the whole group visibly relaxed.

They didn't live in one another's pockets but each member of Liberty had forged bonds with the other six that bordered on a pathological need to ensure they were safe, this had gotten them through the war and while they were sure it would decrease in intensity over time none of them thought it would ever leave them totally and plans were already being discussed to live close and raise their children together.

Nym let out a sigh of contentment as Harry's strong hands rubbed the oil into her shoulders, this really was better than anything she could have hoped for. When she was growing up she had few friends and was also well acquainted with the word 'freak', moving to New York had seen the end of 'Tonks', the brash girl with more front than a Vegas hotel. Nym was a creation of Harry's with his unconditional affection forcing her sixteen year old self to take a long hard look at the roads before her. Having people like you for who you are rather than who you can transform into was a confidence boosting revelation, being 'big sis' to the Potters changed her life forever

This had given her life focus other than the dream of being an auror and she took her new role very seriously, Nym had effortlessly enveloped the other four into her new family as they came along. Harry and Hermione were the heart and brains of their group but Nym was its soul, she was the one who pushed them the hardest and installed into their very being that the most important thing was they all came home after a mission.

That was the mantra that served Liberty so well through the war but if it now meant they got nervous when the only people they trusted to watch their backs weren't there then that was a small price to pay for

what they had gained. Nym had been offered any job she wanted by her mentor, Amelia, and Jim Brogan actually had an 'Elite Operative' badge minted with her name on it saying he considered her to be on extended leave and her office was waiting on her. She'd also turned down offers from numerous cute guys because she didn't feel ready to pull away from the group enough to give a serious boyfriend the attention they would deserve and only someone who'd been through what they had could ever hope to join it.

Nym really was happy with her lot, spending the day with the couple she loved and whose child she'd be godmother to. Tonight she would be dancing with three gorgeous guys, the fact they were all married and she would go to bed alone didn't bother her too much. The right man would come along someday and meanwhile her surrogate siblings treated her like a princess.

Hermione glanced over at her husband as he was broadcasting his thoughts again, Harry was worried that Nym was putting her life on hold for them. She knew he would miss Nym terribly when she does leave but Harry didn't seem to understand that Nym felt the same way about them. All seven of them were the only child their parents had but the bonds between them were stronger than anything short of marriage, when you know that these people would step in front of a bullet for you it's a pretty humbling experience.

The last time Harry broadcast as strong as this was as she walked down the aisle and he just kept repeating 'I'm so lucky' over and over again. She had to threaten him with a duel assault from mum and Nym to get him calmed down enough to take part in the service. The wedding was more for their parents sake than anything else, her dad looked so proud as he walked her down the aisle with her mother as expected in floods of tears.

Jasmine had phoned to say there was a real buzz all over Crawley after she casually let slip that she'd met Hermione and her future husband on the night she became engaged to Dudley, the groom's cousin.

Hermione was aware that by 'buzz' she meant total disbelief that she was getting married at all, far less to her Harry, she could see the

gaping mouths of her former classmates as she entered the church on her father's arm. This was nothing though to the gasps as she left on Harry's, the muggle photographer had a hard time judging his exposure as the couple were glowing on the steps of the centuries old church.

A nervous Draco's best-man speech was unintentionally hilarious as he tried to tell the story of their first meeting in that bathroom but had replaced the troll with a wolf for the non-magical in the audience, unfortunately he forgot to remove the club from the order of events. The muggles in the crowd must have assumed he was on drugs as the wolf wrecked the bathroom before Harry jumped on his back and shoved a stick up its nose while those who knew the real story had tears of laughter running down their cheeks.

Their first dance together was truly magical and both found it safer to stay on the dance floor to avoid all the hangers on that just seemed to appear out the woodwork.

She was quickly pulled out of her daydreaming and took a sharp intake of breath.

Nym could feel Harry stiffen and was immediately alert for danger, she had her wand strapped to her thigh in an invisible holder while another one at her wrist held a razor sharp blade. She turned her head to look at Harry and saw tears fill those startlingly green eyes, he answered her unasked question.

"The baby just kicked for the first time!"

The three were soon in a group hug with each unable to contain their joy at becoming a mum, dad and godmother this summer.

Harry may have had tears on his cheeks as he hugged the two witches but the thrill of feeling a new life moving through the bond he shared with his wife was awe inspiring. His thoughts travelled back to the day it all started when he told Minerva there were more important things in life, this was definitely one of them.

The End

A/N Thanks for reading.